

THE A-Z OF

SPECIAL **SFX** EDITION

SCI-FI MOVIES

124-PAGE CELEBRATION OF THE BEST IN SCI-FI FILM

**YOUR COMPLETE
SFX GUIDE TO
MARVEL
MOVIES**

THE **FINAL VERDICT** ON 30 FILMS

**PLUS! 2013 AND
BEYOND: WHY
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AND ALL-NEW FEATURES ON...

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EXCLUSIVE DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

WALT DISNEY
THE AMAZING UNTOLD STORY

SWORD AND SORCERY
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WELCOME

Sometimes I think that the urge to see as many films as possible is part of my genetic make-up. That is, of course, impossible, as films have only been around for a minuscule fraction of evolutionary time. But I've long had an urge to "collect in my head" lots of different types of films, like those of Alfred Hitchcock, Steven Spielberg, Roman Polanski and Jim Carrey, or Universal monster movies, *Friday The 13th*s, James Bonds and even *Harry Potter* - which I don't even like! (Girlfriends and children were to blame for me seeing most of them.)

This magazine you hold in your hands is a celebration of the magic of cinema, most notably science fiction and fantasy cinema, those movie experiences that have transported you to other worlds and places and made you forget the mundanities of everyday existence.

Perhaps you first experienced the magic in the 1970s, with *Star Wars*, or perhaps it was during the '80s and Michael J Fox's *DeLorean*, or the '90s and Keanu Reeves and his long black coat in *The Matrix*. Maybe it wasn't any of these, and maybe you got hooked because of old Republic serial *Undersea Kingdom* when it was shown on telly in the mid '80s...

Anyway, you're here now, and if you love sci-fi and fantasy movies, I think you'll have a ball with this magazine. And lastly, a word about words, ones that will pop up rather a lot in the following pages. Some *SFX* readers think we should always refer to "films", not "movies", because that's an American word. We concede the point but also believe that "movies" passed over into our lingo a long time ago. You understand what it means. But we won't use it exclusively, oh no - we'll vary it (because otherwise some paragraphs would get very repetitive). Heck, we might even throw in a "flicks" if you're lucky.

And... action!

Russell

Russell Lewin, Editor

THE A-Z OF SCI-FI MOVIES

124-PAGE CELEBRATION OF THE BEST IN SCI-FI FILM

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SFX

The A-Z Of Sci-Fi Movies

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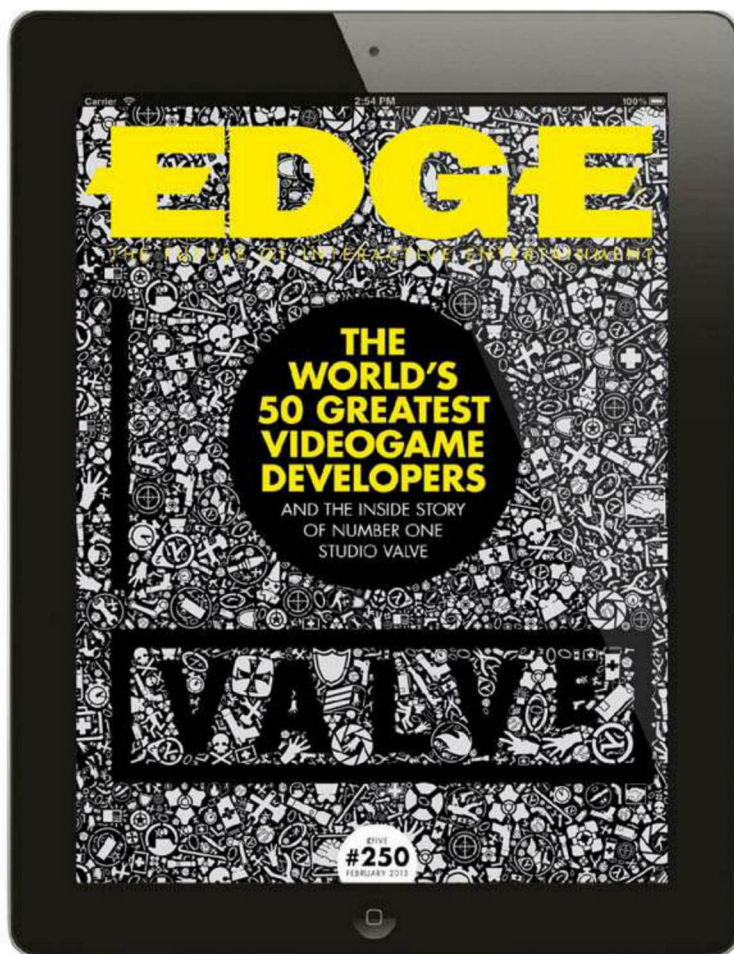
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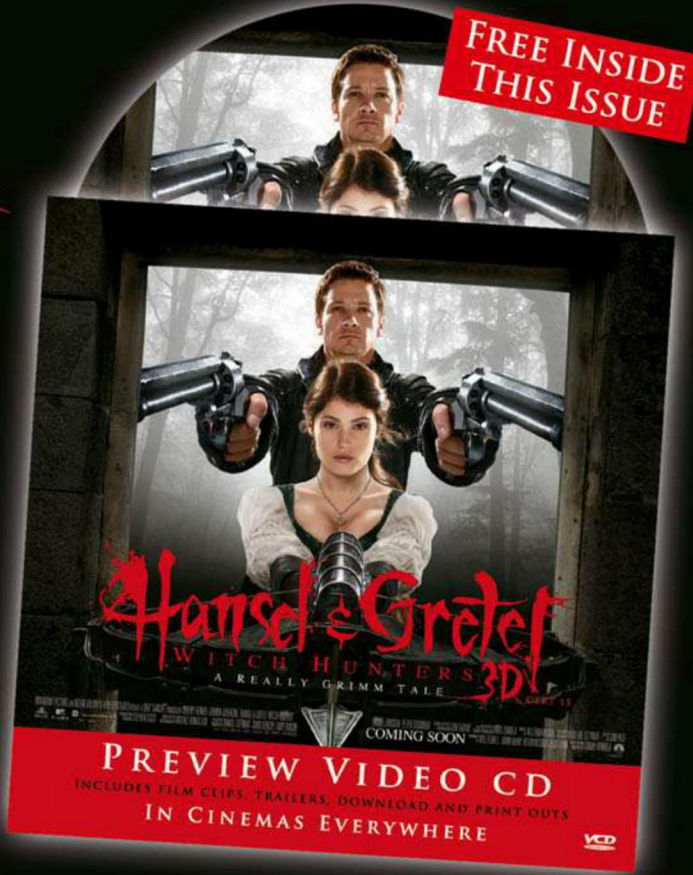
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FREE GIFTS FOR EVERY READER!



FREE INSIDE
THIS ISSUE



To celebrate the release of **Hansel & Gretel Witch Hunters 3D (Cert 15)**, at cinemas **22 February**, we have teamed up with Paramount Pictures UK to bring you an exclusive set of gifts!

Your Preview Video CD is free with this magazine, and is packed full of preview material from the new film. You can also go online to claim two more amazing free gifts - a Puzzle Cube where you can go on your own mission to hunt the Grand Witch from the film, and a giant glossy poster. These gifts are completely free, all you pay is the postage and packaging costs for your chosen items!

After getting a taste for blood as children, Hansel (Jeremy Renner) and Gretel (Gemma Arterton) have become the ultimate vigilantes, hell bent on retribution. Now, unbeknownst to them, Hansel and Gretel have become the hunted, and must face an evil far greater than witches... their past.

PUZZLE CUBE



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ARCADE GAMES

The team behind new Disneytoon **Wreck-It Ralph** on how they pulled off the impossible, and a look at the history behind it

● Words: James White

It might feature voice work from the likes of John C Reilly, Sarah Silverman and Jack McBrayer, but *Wreck-It Ralph* is getting just as much coverage for its "guest stars" from a range of classic videogames. The likes of Sonic, his arch-nemesis Dr Robotnik, Bowser from *Super Mario Bros*, M Bison from *Street Fighter II*, Clyde the ghost and Pac-Man himself, and Q*bert from, well, Q*bert.

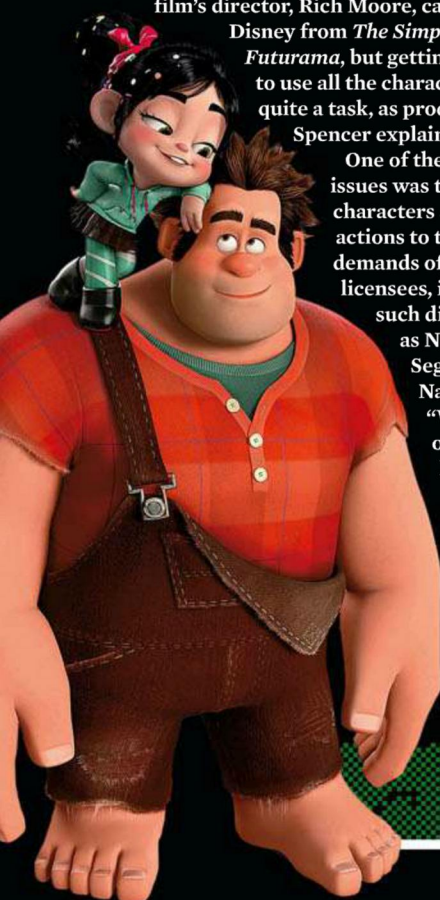
They're just the tip of the pixelated iceberg in *Ralph*, which stretches across three videogame worlds as the villain from an old 8-bit game (*Fix-It Felix Jr*, where the player must put right Ralph's destruction) decides he's sick of what his programmer has given him and wants to become something more. The result is a clever blend of a classic hero's journey stuffed full of more videogame humour than a convention's t-shirt stand. None of this is a surprise given that the

film's director, Rich Moore, came to Disney from *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*, but getting the rights to use all the characters was quite a task, as producer Clark Spencer explains.

One of the biggest issues was tailoring the characters and their actions to the specific demands of the licensees, including such digital giants as Nintendo, Sega and Namco.

"We lucked out," Clark laughs. "I pushed ▶

1UP HIGH SCORE 015300 015300





Ralph will provide lots of fun for videogame character spotters.

extremely hard on our production team to give us as much latitude as possible to address every single note. We were pretty fortunate to be able to do everything that was asked. I kept trying to impart upon the production team that being true to the characters was the best thing we could possibly do and the best way to honour the characters to the company and the people who play them."

Spencer's job was to balance the needs of the characters with what Moore and his team could achieve in the time they had. "There were a lot of times where they'd say, 'I'm not sure we can absorb this note,' and I would beg, and to their credit they got through all the work. They probably didn't have a lot of nice words to say to me, but they got it done!" So what was the main thing that each of the characters' owners wanted to see on screen, especially when Ralph joins a room of villains for bad guy support group Bad-Anon? "The interesting thing is it was less about each company wanting their character to be larger than the next, it was that there are standards for the height of these characters. And everybody knows them, so it was given to us in centimetres, literally as to how these characters line up. So once we got that, we made it work. Our biggest problem was that Ralph is a very large character, so we had to make sure that he still felt big in the room, and at a certain point we were worried he might look too small against the other characters."

The biggest advantage for Ralph's animation team is that Disney is already a place where the right look for characters is paramount. It's a mantra that carried over well when they were getting the look perfect of, say, the bartender from *Tapper* or Zangief from *Street Fighter II*. Even to the point of actions no one had really considered before. "There's a shot where Bowser takes a sip of coffee and Nintendo was very specific as to how he would actually drink," says Spencer. "And with Sega and Sonic, they talked a lot about the fact that Sonic is almost never seen straight on; his head is almost always at a three-quarter angle. That's an animation thing and we totally get that. There are characters we design and after we build them, we start to realise what camera angles would be the best to make that appealing, and we know never to shoot them from below because they don't look good."

RIGHTS MADNESS

But dealing with lawyers and rights issues brought another level of problems, as art director Mike Gabriel explains: "It's amazing the degree of what's acceptable. For instance, the zombie is okay for the movie, but not for spin-offs. So we had to come up with a different version to put in books and other materials. He's close, but not too close to one of the zombies on the *House Of The Dead* arcade cabinets. There are so many arcade cabinets in this movie, and each one was its own hell. Because different artists owned the rights

to the graphics. The marquee has different rights owners to the side panels – it's madness. You can get the rights to the gameplay but not the panel art. So each arcade cabinet has 20 lawyers representing every side of it. It's insane we got it all through. Thank god for Clark and the team."

Though the film takes place in three worlds – the 8-bit *Fix-It Felix Jr.*, *Halo*-like first-person shooter *Hero's Duty* and *Mario Kart*-spoofing racer *Sugar Rush* – there was, at one point, another game that got cut. "It was called *Extreme Easy Living 2*, and it was a combination of *The Sims* meets *Grand Theft Auto* done Disney style," says Spencer. "Whenever we pitched the movie to people early on, before we were deep into the story, people responded to it. The difficulty for us was that's almost too much to put into one movie. And at a certain point we felt our audiences didn't want to go to a fourth world." But if it sounds fun to you too, never fear – it's in the memory bank. "When we came to the hard decision to lose *Extreme Easy Living 2*, the big boss John Lasseter said, 'Don't worry about it – on *Toy Story* there were so many ideas we had to throw out that all came back.' We don't talk about sequels, but it could be in shorts, it could be in other venues [like spin-off movies, videogame versions, books etc]. There's always some way! That made it easier to let it go."

***Wreck-It Ralph* is out now, courtesy of Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures.**

“Nintendo was very specific as to how Bowser would actually drink his coffee”



It's time to... INDULGE THE EDITOR

Commodore 64 in the '80s

I returned from a school trip in the Norfolk Broads and it was there, in my brother's old bedroom. The beautiful beigeness of the Commodore 64 – keyboard, monitor, printer, cassette deck and all. I knew it'd be a while before I'd do anything like go to the Norfolk Broads again.

My twelfth birthday present was anything but my first experience of the 64: my best friend had got one the previous Christmas and the two of us had been furiously engaged in the likes of *Scramble*, *Donkey Kong*, *Manic Miner* and *Jumpin' Jack* in the extension his dad had built, with the heater that didn't fully warm up for 12 hours after being turned on. I knew then I *had* to have a C64. If only so I could play on it in rooms where I couldn't see my breath.

There then followed an intense period of 11 months – it seemed longer – in which I played around 213 games (I know this because I kept a record in the



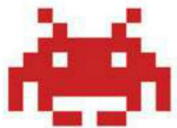
back of a big red book). I became a “dealer” at school, borrowing games from others, copying them, letting them copy mine, building up an enviable library. But of course actually playing the games themselves was the real joy: ones to most enrapture me were *Quo Vadis*, *Son Of Blagger*, *Chuckie Egg* and *Bruce Lee*. And *Impossible Mission*, *Aztec Challenge*, *Loco*, *Forbidden Forest*, *China Miner*, *Cliff Hanger*, *Suicide Express* and many, many more. I remember once literally weeping with frustration playing *Chuckie Egg*, which was highly embarrassing because my dad entered the room at that point. To say I got lost in their worlds was no exaggeration; they felt more real to me than any other, and warmer and safer.

Even the worst games held some sort of excitement or novelty or charm. Everything was so *new* and *fresh*.

To this day, I have absolutely no interest in playing “sophisticated” computer games; C64 products are absolutely fine for me. Nowadays games are so realistic-looking they could be a film or real life – but who wants that?! I want computer games to look like *computer games*, garish, chunky sprites n'all, not some motion-sickness-inducing simulation of a grim combat situation. I occasionally fire the old favourites up on my C64 emulator on my home PC, and while the feeling isn't the same, there's still that wee frisson when I climb them ladders and zap them bugs. It's not game over yet.

WHEN ARCADE GAMES RULED THE WORLD

A look back at the fun 'n' games that inspired *Wreck-It Ralph* ● Words: Steve Jarratt



"Insert Coin".

To many in the late '70s that simple instruction bore dual significance. It was either your signal to embark on a brand new adventure, or an ominous sign that your escapades had just come to an abrupt end – often accompanied by rummaging in pockets for that elusive metal disc that would unlock the doorway to a world of fantasy. This was the dawn of a new kind of entertainment artform; part cinematic experience, part sporting challenge, part hallucinogenic trance.

The videogame had its origins in academia, where, as far back as the late '50s, games were a by-product of research into human-computer interaction. Viewed on cathode ray tubes they were little more than intriguing experiments, but in 1962 a group of MIT programmers, led by Steve Russell, created *Space War*.

Inspired by the stories of EE "Doc" Smith, the team coded a game in which two players controlled opposing spaceships, fighting around the gravity well of a star. Somewhat presciently, *Space War* set the stage for the future of games, in that it was heavily SF-influenced, provided a convincing simulation of natural movement, and was played competitively over a network.

The evolution of this nascent form of leisure pursuit accelerated rapidly. Steve Russell introduced his game to Nolan Bushnell, an engineering student who in 1971 created *Computer Space*, the first commercially available video arcade machine. Bushnell's next step was to develop a version of tennis, based on the Magnavox Odyssey TV game, the world's first home console. The coin-op was called *Pong*, and his company rebranded to become Atari.

The proliferation of *Pong* clones in arcades and on home consoles eventually caused the first videogame crash of 1977, when many manufacturers pulled out of the market. Fortunately, the arcades were reignited a year later when Japanese game company Taito



Having a gobble in *Pac-Man*.

released *Space Invaders*. Designer Tomohiro Nishikado cites *War Of The Worlds* and *Star Wars* as his influences, and the coin-op itself would inspire the next generation of game makers, including Shigeru Miyamoto and Hideo Kojima.

Arcades, leisure centres, pubs and bowling alleys up and down the land reverberated to the sinister duh-dum, duh-dum, duh-dum of the invaders as they advanced toward the player, a hail of fire destroying your precious protective bunkers. The heartbeat tempo of the game gradually increased as the alien numbers depleted (a serendipitous side-effect of the underpowered CPU), until a single frenzied invader remained, criss-crossing the screen and defying your laser cannon with its lamentable rate of fire.

This wasn't the sedate back-and-forth of *Pong*; *Space Invaders* delivered excitement, tension, fear... and elation when that final alien exploded, allowing you to progress further than you'd ever been before.

And, for the first time, human beings found themselves in competition with a truly alien life form. Although these accumulations of pixels weren't yet artificially intelligent, it was easy to impose upon them an identity; to see them as some otherworldly combatant.



The game proved an instant hit. Within two years, Taito had sold some 360,000 cabinets in Japan and the US, and caused a shortage of 100 Yen coins, locked away in the belly of the beast. In fact, with profits of \$500 million, *Space Invaders* was a bigger financial success than the original cinematic release of *Star Wars*.

GOLDEN YEARS

Taito's coin-op is generally regarded as the beginning of the Golden Age of Videogames, when, for a brief period from the late '70s to the early '80s, the coin-op and home console industries enjoyed phenomenal growth. In 1982, the videogames market taken as a whole generated around \$12 billion in revenue. And that's back when a billion was a lot of money (the adjusted figure represents around \$30 billion today, and is nearly twice that generated by the videogame industry in 2011). As an indicator of success, the *Tron* coin-op took more money than the movie did on its release.

Coin-ops such as *Asteroids*, *Pac-Man*, *Galaxian*, *Defender*, *Centipede*, *Donkey Kong* and *Q*bert* began filling the arcades with their own beeping, bleeping soundtracks. And it was a rich time for innovation, too, with all manner of different gaming concepts and styles, from shooters to platform games, puzzles to beat 'em ups, laying the foundations for genres which would endure for decades to come.

Then in 1983 it all went 8-bits up, when the industry experienced an abrupt and massive recession. Over the course of just two years – due to oversaturation of coin-ops and home consoles, proliferation of poor quality games, and retailers' dismissal of this new “fad” – revenues fell from \$3.2 billion to \$100 million. Still a significant figure, but not enough to support the array of companies that had piled into the market. Hardware manufacturers and game development studios went bust and unsold stock was drastically reduced in price.

At this time Atari famously overestimated the demand for its games. A poor conversion of *Pac-Man* sold just half of the production run, while the licensed *ET* “game” (it barely qualified as one), was developed in just six weeks and rushed to market. The high-profile title duly sold 1.5 million copies – unfortunately Atari had manufactured five million.

Just as toy stores cleared remaining inventory and it looked like the fledgling industry was about to disappear for good, an Italian plumber came to its rescue. In 1983, Nintendo released the Family Computer, or Famicom in Japan, and two years later it would appear in the US as the Nintendo Entertainment System. At first the NES struggled against a largely indifferent retail, but clever marketing and a desire to maintain the quality and quantity of third-party products helped it gain a foothold. With the help of *Super Mario Bros* and its sequels, the NES enjoyed a

“The *Tron* coin-op took more money than the movie did”

production run lasting 20 years and would shift over 67 million units.

But as home consoles took off once more so the coin-op's fate was sealed. Despite a resurgence in the '90s due to the popularity of beat 'em ups like *Street Fighter II* and its ilk, the arcades just couldn't compete with the advances in console graphics and networked multiplayer. The coin-op industry is now a shadow of its former self, but the glory days live on with a thriving trade in gaming nostalgia.

It's no surprise that *Wreck-It Ralph* rubs shoulders with icons from gaming's rich history – characters such as Q*bert, Clyde from *Pac-Man*, Bowser, M Bison and Sonic the Hedgehog. Games are no longer compartmentalised by time: you can play all of the classics in PC emulators or web browsers and in titles ported to phones and tablets. Seven quid on the iTunes store will buy you the complete back-catalogue of '70s and '80s Atari games. You could spend that much trying to get past level two of *Asteroids*.

But while the games themselves are replicated perfectly, the experience has become sanitised. Playing on an iPhone is like viewing the past through a letterbox, blinkered to the sights, smells and sounds of the arcade. Anyone who lived through videogames' formative years will know the thrill and wonder of seeing these games for the first time. The fizzing, electric colour schemes and dissonant soundtracks were fresh and unfamiliar. We were pioneers of uncharted territory, where each new level promised greater challenges and death was but a mild irritation...

Rummage, rummage. Insert coin. Ⓜ



Rescuing the girl in *Donkey Kong*.



Q*bert and sleeker pal Sonic the Hedgehog.



Bond... James

Words: Russell Lewin

BOND GIRLS: THE ULTIMATE POLL

Two lots of top (00)7 girls, as chosen by men and women, separately

We polled 1,000 males and 1,000 females, discretely*, and asked them to name their favourite Bond girl, using their own criteria. The results were fascinating: just look at the difference in the two lists. Perhaps it could be concluded that women slightly preferred

The top female choices



1 Honor Blackman
as Pussy Galore,
Goldfinger

"Her name is ridiculous and amazing and she's in charge of a kick-ass army of ladies"



2 Ursula Andress
as Honey Ryder,
Dr No



3 Eva Green
as Vesper Lynd,
Casino Royale

"Possibly the most visually iconic Bond girl. Also she was a bit curvy which is nice for us normos"

The top male choices



1 Eva Green
as Vesper Lynd,
Casino Royale

"Slutty and with intelligent, humbling eyes. A pin-up for bright people"



2 Honor Blackman
as Pussy Galore,
Goldfinger



3 Famke Janssen
as Xenia Onatopp,
GoldenEye

The girls: rated

Here a lads mag journo and a feminist writer give their thoughts on each of the chosen Bond girls. But who's saying what? Which is the *FHM* writer, which is the *Guardian* writer? We've mixed

their answers up to confuse! Can you guess correctly? Answers are at the bottom of the next spread.
Words: Lee Coan & Nina Cromeyer Dieke

Honor Blackman
VOICE 1: The best dressed Bond girl - her styling is sexy,

not slutty. Add that to a voice as husky as the Cookie Monster, and you've something special.
VOICE 2: A judo expert and a pilot, Pussy is respectable, beautiful in a realistic way, and I can take her seriously.

Ursula Andress
VOICE 1: In that bikini, an icon

- kill me and let me be reincarnated as her conch.
VOICE 2: I don't see what all the fuss is about: she is a bit dishevelled and that bikini is not exactly flattering. Her naivete is frankly annoying.

Eva Green
VOICE 1: The smoky eyes, the

Bond

Celebrating the wonderful world of Britain's favourite secret agent

the more "ballsy" Bond girls, along with the "classic" girls, like Ursula Andress and Honor Blackman. Interestingly, just three girls appear in both lists.

The comments you see next to some of the girls are from those we polled. Enjoy!

"Why? Because she's a jewel smuggler and circus owner. She lives on a floating palace and her name is Octopussy. Doesn't get better than that"



4 Halle Berry
as Jinx,
Die Another Day



5 Grace Jones
as May Day,
A View To A Kill



6 Maud Adams
as Octopussy,
Octopussy



7 Barbara Bach
as Anya, *The Spy Who Loved Me*

"Only hasn't made my number one because I just read in real life she was married to Ringo Starr. Hugely off-putting, she's had sex with Thomas the Tank Engine"



4 Barbara Bach
as Anya,
The Spy Who Loved Me



5 Diana Rigg
as Tracey Draco, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*



6 Lois Chiles
as Holly Goodhead,
Moonraker



7 Lana Wood
as Plenty O'Toole,
Diamonds Are Forever

"My abiding memory of her is she shows up, is really cute, and then gets heaved out of a window for no discernible reason"

pout, her elegant accent, Ms Green is a beautiful woman. Her character has integrity.
VOICE 2: I interviewed her once and she did the whole thing in a whisper. I have no idea why, I thought she was going to murder me. I would have let her. It would have been glorious.

Halle Berry
VOICE 1: Although Halle Berry's beauty is a non-debate, Jinx only convinces during the plane sword fight. Besides that, the character is forced and a bit awkward.
VOICE 2: It's all about the wiggle. Other Bond girls have Jinx's wit, brains, curves, style,

but not one can do the swishing thing she does with her hips. Hypnotising.

Grace Jones
VOICE 1: The one true fashionista of Bond girls. If she wanted to she could rip your head from your neck and then wear your face as a hat.

VOICE 2: A welcome change to the stereotypical bombshell in the Bond franchise. Personality-wise, a woman of few words. Aka bland.

Maud Adams
VOICE 1: A very glamorous, very level-headed lady. She delivers as the calm and

collected leader of the ass (bum?)-kicking all-female Octopus cult.

VOICE 2: Silk dressing gowns, sultry looks, a bit wrong, a bit saucy – she has that “mate from school’s hot mum” thing going on.

Barbara Bach

VOICE 1: It’s not easy to look sexy in a crocheted hat, but Babs does it with ease. I so wanted her to kill 007 for what he did to her. “Choke him with your woolly hat, Anya!”

VOICE 2: Stunning. Those cheekbones! An agent to match Bond, Anya’s grace belies her cunning nature.

Famke Janssen

VOICE 1: When she humps a bald man to death there is not a single male who wasn’t thinking, “You lucky bastard, I wish it were me dying like that.”

VOICE 2: Takes the pleasure she derives from killings to a cheesy place. Her sexiness is matched by her silliness.

Diana Rigg

VOICE 1: More serious than other Bond girls, to a point where she becomes a bit dull.

VOICE 2: She’s got that girl-next-door factor, something so many Bond girls lack. No wonder Bond married her.

Lois Chiles

VOICE 1: Dr Goodhead looked bored during the entire film and her hair is way too ’70s disco.

VOICE 2: It’s possibly her hair, maybe the yellow onesie, but Lois is so beautiful it’s almost enough to make you forget *Moonraker*’s ridiculous plot/Moore’s wrinkly old neck.

Lana Wood

VOICE 1: Maybe it’s due to the fact Wood was sleeping with Connery in real life but she creates an atmosphere so sweet you could spread it on toast. God, I’d eat that toast.

VOICE 2: The few lines she has are hilarious and her bubblyness is refreshingly funny after the sultriness of other Bond girls.

ANSWERS Honor Blackman **VOICE 1** Male; Ursula Andress **VOICE 1** Male; Eva Green **VOICE 2** Male; Halle Berry **VOICE 2** Male; Grace Jones **VOICE 1** Male; Maud Adams **VOICE 2** Male; Barbara Bach **VOICE 1** Male; Famke Janssen **VOICE 1** Male; Diana Rigg **VOICE 2** Male; Lois Chiles **VOICE 2** Male; Lana Wood **VOICE 1** Male

Double eh?? Seven

Some of the weirder answers we got to our question

“Judi Dench but she needs some more beef on her”

“Dr No, *From Russia, Casino Royale*”

“My is my favourite”

“Caroline Cossey in *For Your Eyes Only* because she used to be a bloke called Barry and everyone likes surprises (see *The Crying Game*)”

“Lotte Lenya who played SPECTRE agent Rosa Klebb in *From Russia With Love*. Check out those shoes (and she looks like a Nazi)”

James Bond in numbers

Words: Steve O’Brien

25

Number of times the line “The name’s Bond, James Bond” has been said

196

Number of deaths in *You Only Live Twice*

51

Amount of baddies killed by Roger Moore

56

The age Ian Fleming died of a heart attack

1

Number of times Bob Holness played James Bond

51

Amount of baddies killed by Sean Connery

57

Age of Roger Moore when he exited as Bond

10

Number of films featuring Felix Leiter

33

Age of Pierce Brosnan when first offered the role of James Bond for *The Living Daylights*

32

Age of Sean Connery when he debuted as Bond

22

Age of Timothy Dalton when originally approached for the role for *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*

17.15

Amount of minutes you have to wait for James Bond to appear in *From Russia With Love*

20

Total amount of women kissed by Roger Moore

18

Total amount of women kissed by Connery’s 007

4

Total amount of women kissed by Timothy Dalton

5 Number of credited directors on the 1967 *Casino Royale*

2 billion. Estimated number of people who have ever watched a Bond movie

6 Number of actress who have played Miss Moneypenny on screen (Barbara Bouchet in the

3 Amount of Bond appearances by Maud Adams (she's Andrea Anders in *The Man With The Golden Gun*, the title character of *Octopussy* and an extra in *A View To A Kill*)

46

Number of women bedded by Bond, from *Dr No* to *Skyfall*

spoof *Casino Royale*, Pamela Salem in *Never Say Never Again*, Lois Maxwell from *Dr No* to *A View To A Kill*, Caroline Bliss in *The Living Daylights* and *Licence To Kill*, Samantha Bond from *GoldenEye* to *Die Another Day* and now Naomie Harris in *Skyfall*)

1 Number of Welsh actors to have played James Bond (that's Timothy Dalton)

162

IQ of *Diamonds Are Forever* Bond girl Jill St John

6 Number of years between *Licence To Kill* and *GoldenEye*

21

The amount of times in the books that Bond drinks his second favourite drink, a Scotch and Soda

0000007

The number of IMDb's James Bond character page

75 Number in British charts that Rita Coolidge's *Octopussy* theme tune "All Time High" got to, for one week. More of an all-time low, almost (although Lulu's "The Man With The Golden Gun" didn't chart at all in the UK!)

1.2

million. Amount of gallons of water used for Stromberg's supertanker in *The Spy Who Loved Me*

4.5 Weeks after you've bought the Complete James Bond DVD box set before you get that itch that you just *have* to buy *Never Say Never Again*. Probably

1 Number of F-words in the entire 25-film Bond oeuvre, in *Skyfall* (and see over the page)

4 Amount of words Jaws says on screen

3 Number of Bond themes sung by Shirley Bassey (*Goldfinger*, *Diamonds Are Forever* and *Moonraker*)

11 Amount of films co-scripted by Richard Maibaum

An “F” for Skyfall

Russell Lewin has one problem with the latest Bond film

Skyfall is one of the very best James Bond films, probably sitting comfortably in the top six. The cinematography is simply stunning, Daniel Craig is magnificent, Javier Bardem is the tastiest baddie in years, the plot is solid yet surprising, and some of the setpieces are audaciously wonderful. Hell, even the theme song is good.

But there is one single thing in it that jars, something that has no place in it. And that is Judi Dench saying the F-word. Sheriff Pepper in *Live And Let Die* might have appeared to mouth it as Bond's speedboat flew over his head, but this was the first time in 50 years and 23 films we actually *heard* it in a Bond film. While not wanting to get bogged down with the rights and wrongs of the BBFC allowing F-words in films for 12-year-olds (see Soapbox in *SFX* 217), my objection to it would be on the following grounds: it is crass that this word is spoken just once in a two-hour film; it is even more crass that this word is used just once in 23 films. Yes, the Craig films effectively rebooted the Bond universe, but that universe is still a single one: you can buy all the films in one box set, for instance. So we have to accept that M says the F-word, but Bond didn't when he was having his testicles beaten in *Casino Royale*, or when he encountered man-mountain Jaws for the first time, or when he was hanging off Golden Gate Bridge in *A View To A Kill*. Nor did any of the snarling villains that 007 has met over the decades.



Bond villains don't resort to potty mouths.

The Bond universe may vary in its fantasticness – *You Only Live Twice* has jet packs, *Die Another Day* has an invisible car, *Casino Royale* has a card game – but the vernacular is more or less consistent, and such a jagged shard as a strong expletive in one second of one film of one long series is both stupid and gratuitous. You could also argue that it's a salient signpost

on the way to coarser public discourse, as ever younger and larger audiences become acquainted with such filmic exchanges.

Who knows, maybe this will become the norm in Bond films, although I hope not. Despite some violence and sexiness, Bond films have generally been suitable for family viewing, and young lads (and lasses) can happily watch them with Dad (or Mum). I've spoken to several parents (including a cinema manager, see page 20) who are uncomfortable with the Dame's foul-mouthed utterance.

It's a misstep from normally adept filmmakers – the F-word has no part to play in the Bond universe. *Skyfall* remains a great film, but the TV edit of this one might be the one to watch in future.

“It is crass that this word is spoken just once in a two-hour film; and even more crass that it's once in 23 films”



Words: Steve O'Brien

Roger Moore

in the afternoon

Last October the Bond legend visited Bath. It was a day to remember...

Few celebrities wear their stardom like a Beatle or a Bond. But those who saw (or more precisely *heard*) Paul McCartney trudging his way through "Hey Jude" at the Olympics opening ceremony had to face the grisly truth that Macca isn't just a late middle-aged man any more, he's a properly old one. There's a similar reality check as Roger Moore (admittedly 15 years McCartney's senior), shuffles steadily onto the stage of Bath's Theatre Royal to the strains of Monty Norman's James Bond theme. His book – *Bond On Bond* – on sale in the foyer and the iPod playlist that floods the auditorium to get us in the mood – from Macca's "Live And Let Die" to *The Persuaders* theme – lulls you into thinking the man who will walk on stage is the same one who battled Kananga and smooched Octopussy. Then you realise, James Bond is 85.

The crowd for this *Afternoon With Roger Moore* is broader than this defiantly mid-brow theatre is used to. The lure of Bond can pull in the youngies, the oldies and the inbetweens and even if you don't feel that everyone here would be able to name all his Bond movies in order (pfft – easy!) or know the difference between a Guy Hamilton and a Guy Haley, then you know they're here because Sir Rog is cherished as much for being Sir Roger Moore as being James Bond of the Secret Service.

Prior to Sir Rog taking the stage, it's fun killing the time playing spot the fanboy. There, that man behind me, alone but for a Sainsbury's carrier-bag containing what's probably a jamboree of 007 VHS's and old *TV Times* magazines, is a possible. And him, the one with the handkerchief lolling rakishly out his jacket pocket, looks like he's no stranger to a *Persuaders* box set. And there are a gaggle of grannies here who might have taken the telephone off the hook when *Ivanhoe* was on, back in the '50s.

Roger Moore last walked the Bath Theatre Royal's stage floor 52 years ago ("Back by popular demand then," deadpans Gareth Owen, Moore's amiable on-stage interviewer, and



Scraping in his younger days.



And not a raised eyebrow in sight.

co-author with Sir Rog of *Bond On Bond* and *My Word Is My Bond*) and the talk's first half is peppered with rusty anecdotes from a pre-Beatles and pre-Bond Britain. It's weird to remember Moore's modest professional background, before the days of global superstardom and UNICEF ambassadorship. He tells of his contemporaries at RADA: "One was a young girl named Lois Hooker," he says, pausing, and then adding, "who later became Lois Maxwell." (Slight audience murmur.) "And she later became my Moneypenny." (Big collective intake of breath.) "Another was a lady named Yootha Joyce," he adds. "*George & Mildred*!" cries the man with the bulging Sainsbury's bag behind me. "*George & Mildred...*" he repeats, but quieter.

Despite the appearance of this as an off-the-cuff stage chat, it's lightly scripted, with Owen often having to bury his geek credentials for the benefit of a Moore quip. "With *The Saint* you got to travel the world – the Bahamas, Paris, Rome, all these terrific locations. It must have been quite an exciting time," he suggests, as if the writer of *The Shepperton Story* wouldn't know a collection of budget-saving studio backdrops from real location work.

The second half is when the talk revs up, when the discussion arrives at Bond. Most of the stories are familiar to the Bond junkies, from Hervé Villechaize's fondness for Thai hookers, to adding impossible-to-remember gobbledegook into Desmond Llewelyn's script when his Q wasn't looking, but Moore tells them brilliantly.

Owen throws it open to the audience for the last 15 minutes, and it's either fawning young men (is Roger Moore *really* their favourite actor? I mean, *really*?) or swooning old women, lunging in for a hand kiss. Then, the "*George & Mildred*" man decides to put his hand up to ask which Roger Moore's favourite *Saint* episode is, as if a mention of "The Golden Frog" or "The Persistent Parasite" (I had to look them up) is going to mean anything to anyone there.

When Moore shuffles off the stage (it really is a shuffle) to the 007 theme, the crowd take to their feet for a good two minutes, clapping their little hands off. These are all stories that he's told a hundred times before, but you're not able to keep those stories funny and fresh without some considerable talent. Though that, in his brilliant self-deprecating way, is something Sir Roger Moore certainly would strongly disagree with. ▶

The Bond Glossary

Stuff you quite possibly didn't know about 007's world, courtesy of the Bluffer's Guide

Words: Mark Mason

BENTLEY Make of car driven by Bond in the novels, as opposed to the Aston Martins/BMWs/Lotuses etc, of the films. Customised and supercharged Bentleys, of course. The literary Bond wouldn't be seen dead in anything else.

CAMEO One of the air stewardesses in *Die Another Day* is played by Roger Moore's daughter Deborah.

CIGARS Roger Moore's contract as 007 specified that he be allowed an unlimited supply of hand-rolled Montecristo cigars while filming.

COWARD, NOËL Ian Fleming's friend (and neighbour in Jamaica). Was offered the role of villain in the first Bond film; his telegram reply said: "Dr No? No! No! No!"

DIGITAL WATCH Bond first departs from the analogue version in *Live And Let Die*. They were all the rage once.

DISCLAIMER You know that bit in the end credits of a film that says "No animals were harmed or mistreated in the making of this movie"? The first film it ever appeared in – not just the first Bond film, the first film full stop – was *Never Say Never Again*.

A horse had jumped off a cliff. Entirely safely, of course.

EXPLODING ALARM CLOCK Provided in *Licence To Kill*. Q tells Bond it's guaranteed not to wake up the person using it.

FETTES COLLEGE The Edinburgh public school, often referred to as the "Scottish Eton", attended by James Bond after he'd been expelled from Eton itself, following an incident with one of the maids. Fettes was also attended by Ian Fleming's father, and indeed, Tony Blair. A young Sean Connery was once the school's milkman.

FLICK, VIC Guitarist responsible for the famous *dun-duddle-un-dun, dun-dun-dun* James Bond movie theme. Suggest he was chosen because his name made him sound like a Bond villain.

FRÖBE, GERT German actor who starred as the villain in *Goldfinger* and Baron Bomburst in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, the distinctly Bond-like story Fleming wrote for children. Which was the more over-the-top performance is debatable.

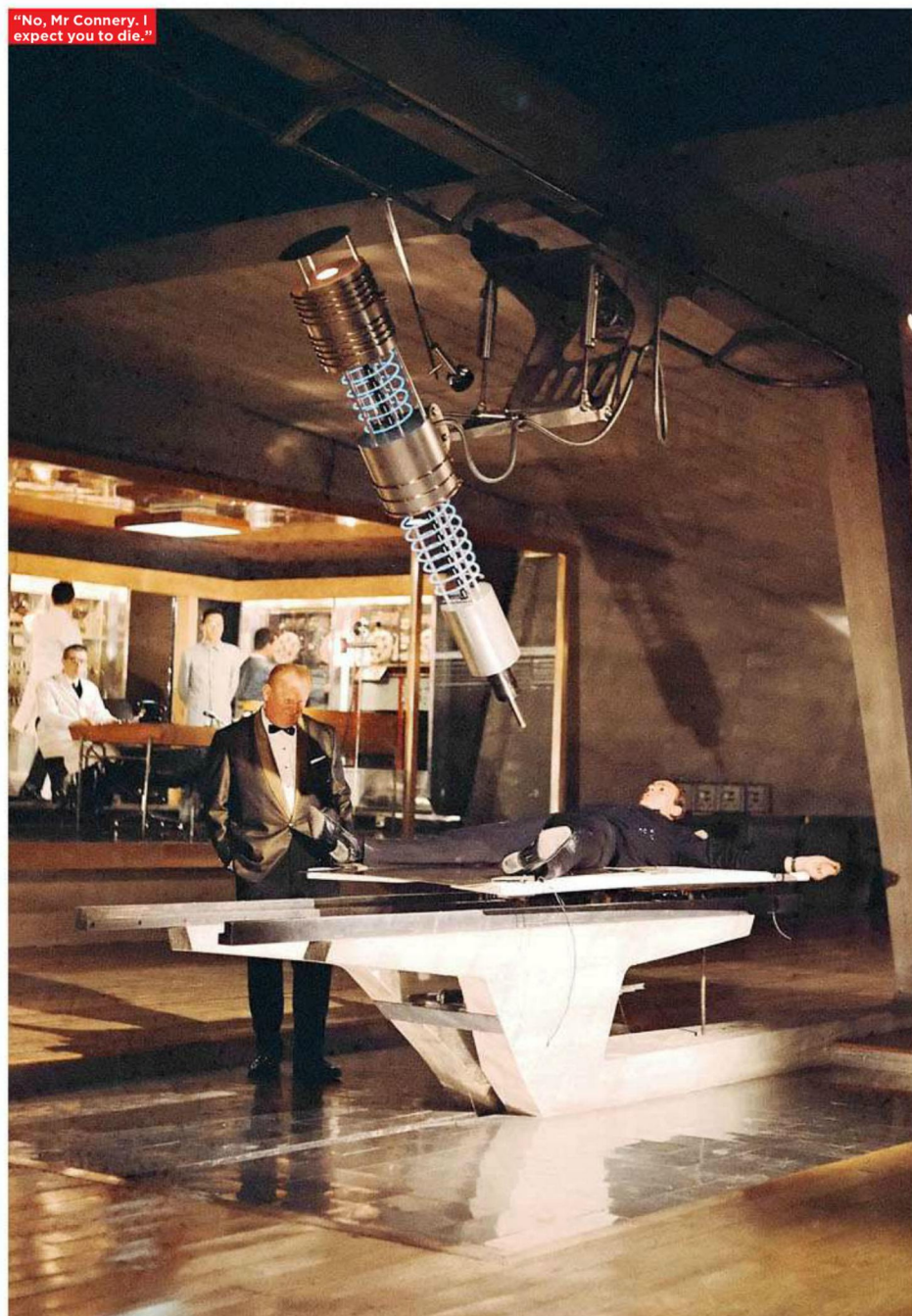
GAMBON, MICHAEL British actor approached to replace George Lazenby. He countered that he was bald; Cubby Broccoli retorted that so was Sean Connery. Gambon further countered that he had breasts like a woman; Broccoli replied that they'd use ice packs before the love scenes: "Like we did with Sean."

GEIGER COUNTER Bond uses one in *Dr No* as he searches a boat for radioactive rocks. His first gadget, and the last one to be remotely credible.

KEY RING Used in Timothy Dalton's debut *The Living Daylights*. It emits a cloud of stun gas when Bond whistles the opening bars of "Rule Britannia". In real life that would be all very well until he attended the Last Night of the Proms.

LASER The most famous Bond weapon of all was one that was used against Bond rather than by him. *Goldfinger*'s laser accompanies his legendary "No, Mr Bond. I expect you to die" line. Although the beam was a special effect added later, the table on which Bond is strapped really was cut open by a blowtorch operated from beneath. It gets rather close to Sean Connery's "gentleman's region". No wonder his acting in this scene is particularly convincing.

LICENCE TO KILL The title, in Italy, of *Dr No*. This created a problem, of course, when *Licence To Kill* came out 26 years later. So they called that one *Private Revenge*. Don't you just yearn for the next Bond film to be called *Private Revenge*?





Not all foreign posters caught Connery's likeness...

M Head of Bond's Secret Service. Frederick Forsyth put forward the theory that Fleming took the "M" from the first name of the first real head of MI6, Captain Sir Mansfield Cumming. Get bonus bluffing points for referring to not one thriller writer but two. Then go one better and suggest that the prototype for M was Maxwell Knight, the spymaster who recruited Fleming as his agent.

PINEWOOD STUDIOS Long-time home to the Bond movies. Its "007 Stage" is, at 59,000 square feet, the largest in Europe. This dates from *The Spy Who Loved Me*, whose set designer Ken Adam warned Cubby Broccoli that there wasn't a stage big enough for the film's setpieces. The producer's response was simple: "Then build it."

PORTABLE PHOTOCOPIER Used by George Lazenby in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Well, it was state-of-the-art at the time. Bond copies some documents, then, just for good measure, the centrefold from a nearby issue of *Playboy*.

Q He who traditionally arms Bond with his high-tech gadgets at the beginning of an assignment. Stands for "Quartermaster". Q was not a character in the novels, although in the first one, *Casino Royale*, it is "Q Branch" that supplies 007's gadgets.

SAKATA, HAROLD Actor who played Oddjob in *Goldfinger*. Represented the USA in the 1948 Olympics as a weightlifter. Well, it wasn't going to be the 100-metre hurdles, was it?



Timothy Dalton goes Italian.

SEAGAL, STEVEN Before he grunted and glared his way across our screens as a B-list star himself, Seagal was the martial-arts coach on *Never Say Never Again*.

SEAGULL SNORKEL SUIT Not to be confused with Seagal, above. Put a seagull on top of a snorkel and you'll be able to trick your way into a drugs-manufacturing complex. At least you will if you're Sean Connery in *Goldfinger*.

SMERSH The Soviet counter-intelligence body fought by Bond. The acronym is short for SMERt SHpionam – literally, "death to spies" in Russian. The real-life (and much smaller) SMERSH was founded in the 1940s by the Red Army. Joseph Stalin was responsible for the name.

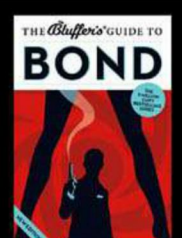
SPECTRE Global criminal conspiracy headed by Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Stands for Special Executive for Counter-intelligence, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion. Unlike SMERSH, it's fictional.

TUXEDO Pierce Brosnan's 007 contract forbade him from wearing a tux in any other film. That's why in *The Thomas Crown Affair*, when he dances with Rene Russo at a formal ball, his bow tie is untied, thereby getting round the clause.

UNIVERSAL EXPORTS Fictional company name used by Bond's Secret Service as a cover for its activities. Very fitting, as by the 1970s Britain's industrial decline was so marked that just about its only remaining profitable exports were the Bond films.

"Although the beam was a special effect added later, the table was cut open by a blowtorch from beneath"

The Bluffer's Guide To Bond is published by Bluffer's Guides and is available from all good booksellers, priced £4.99. It's also available in a Kindle edition for £4.14. We recommend it most highly.





Cinema



Words: Russell Lewin

There was no avoiding this one! We look at cinema itself, talking to a cinema manager, and then get up to a bit of mischief

Martin Jennings-Wright has been the manager of the Little Theatre in Bath for the last seven years. One of the oldest cinemas in the West country, it commands a great deal of affection in the city and shows a variety of new and old films on its two screens, with a leaning towards arthouse fare. Here we talk to Martin about his time in charge, what he actually does, and how he sees the future of cinema.

So how did you come to be in this job?

After doing politics at university I went to work in an archive library in Oxford, which was the dreariest job in the world. The only thing that kept me going was going to see films in the evening and when a job came up at the Phoenix

Picture House in the city I leapt at it, without any previous experience at all, apart from seeing films. It was run by the same company as the Little Theatre, City Screen. So then I came here looking for a fresh challenge.

Give me an idea of your average day.

It doesn't involve sitting round watching films scoffing popcorn, I'm sad to report. By and large when films are on you're busy doing pretty tedious things like rotas and ordering popcorn and taking care of customer complaints, that sort of thing. I do a lot of front of house, so I might be tearing tickets and serving popcorn, then I'll rush upstairs and start the projector. It's a varied day.

Do you have to be mad about movies to work here?

Yeah, I am mad about films but I'm not completely indiscriminate. Funnily enough, probably the best people who've worked here – front of house staff – have been ones who know how the public tick, about customer service. Quite often the ones who are really into films – and it's lovely to chat to them about films – sometimes they're useless when it comes to helping out: the more they chat about films the slower the service is! From a management point of view I suppose it's more useful to be a vaguely confident multi-tasker, and also the technical side has come much more into it – during the time I've been here we've seen this massive



Martin Jennings-Wright,
Bath, 7 November 2012.



The projection room is entered
through the open-air balcony!

change where 35mm has become largely a thing of the past. When we got digital projectors we were worried it was relatively untried but it's actually been fine.

How do you choose the films you show?

Well, it's really a process of being part of City Screen. They're a company who don't believe too much in the way of commerce and branding so it's kind of invisible and a lot of people do see this place as independent. To an extent it is, but in terms of what City Screen do for us, we'll give them requests for various films that we think will work here, and they'll then go to distributors and if enough cinemas in the City Screen group want those films then they'll be able to get much better terms than if we were purely standalone. So it enables us to punch above our weight, and then our programmer, who works in London, will get back to me and let me know what the distributor has said, and they might want such

"Quite often the staff who are really into films are useless when it comes to helping out front of house"

and such on so many times a day. We sort out the times, she'll get back to the distributor and it'll be a done deal.

When exactly is the decision made whether the film will play a further week?

It depends on the film. If it's something like *Skyfall*, then the distributors are in such a powerful position they'll say that it has to be on for two weeks and all shows have to be on your biggest screen. You're not allowed to have any other show in there and if they find you've

put it in the smallest screen they'll withdraw it. By the second Monday you make the call to the distributor and say it's doing really well, we'd like to keep it for another week, and then do that on a week-by-week basis. For a smaller film you might book it for a week, sometimes less, and again on the Monday following that first weekend you make a call to discuss whether it's worth keeping on.

Has switching to digital changed anything?

Yes, in the old days it didn't matter if you were



Now that's what we call a lived-in office.

doing really good business with a film, if the print you were playing had been booked by the cinema down the road it'd have to go. But with digital the drive comes via courier, you put it into a projector and then once you've "ingested" it you pull the drive out and it can go off anywhere else, but you've got the film in the projector.

Indefinitely?

Yes, for as long as you've got space for it. You can't play it indefinitely – to unlock a film, we are sent a KDM via email. This will allow the film to be played for a very specific date range.

Ever booked a film just because you liked it? Or is it always a purely commercial decision?

We've never kept on a film just because we liked it and we felt the people of Bath deserved to see it whether they wanted to or not, but I've certainly been guilty of getting films in that I didn't necessarily think would do enormously well but they're personal favourites. We've got three musicals coming up in our next programme – *Singin' In The Rain*, *Meet Me In St Louis* and *An American In Paris* – I love them and have been wanting to see them on the big screen and I'm thrilled I've won out on that one. Our next really big film is going to be *The Hobbit*, but in 2D. I hate 3D!

I was going to ask you about 3D. So you don't like it?

I can't bear it. I know it's a big, contentious issue but with me it boils down to the fact that I can't make any sense of it if I'm not wearing my glasses, but I can't wear two pairs of glasses on my nose at the same time, it just doesn't feel right. I find 3D intrusive, but when it's

not intrusive I find it a complete waste of time because I'm not picking up on it, so I kind of lose both ways.

What's the worst behaviour you've seen in your cinema? Ever had to throw anyone out?

We've been really lucky. The worst behaviour we have is when we have seniors silver screen – they get free tea and cake as part of their cinema ticket, and the worst thing is when some people get more than one piece of cake [laughs]! Bath is just monumentally civilised.

Are cinemas in danger of pricing themselves out of business? Some people complain that a trip for the family could cost as much as £50-£60, if you include snacks.

Yes, with the refreshment side of things you've got to be careful: people might just rebel and do more of what they've done for decades and bring in their own stuff.

Is that not forbidden?

Of course it's forbidden but people still do it – that's what gets my goat; we don't mind tidying up between shows but when it's things like Costa coffee cups, for god's sake! With snacks you've got to keep your prices in line with what's reasonable, but there's always been this adage that that's where we made our profit. You do have to shift a fair amount of refreshments or you're going to have to stick your ticket prices up. There's very little money in the cinema game – an awful lot goes to the distributors and makers of films.

Can you say a bit about how profitable the Little is?



The obsolete film reels – it's all digital now.

Well, *Skyfall* last week was our busiest week ever.

Ever?

Yes, ever, in terms of the number of people in, the amount they spent at the box office and the kiosk. During its first week, we took 20 grand which is enormous for us because we're only titchy and normally a busy film is around five grand. The downside is that with a mainstream film the distributor will get something like 70 to 80 per cent during the first week of the film's release. The nice thing about an arthouse kind of film is that by and large the distributor is almost grateful when you show them and they'll only take something like 30 to 35 per cent. The rate for *Skyfall* will come down in subsequent weeks but that's a matter of negotiation between us and them. We make our share not necessarily from



“The worst behaviour we have is at seniors screenings – some people get more than one piece of cake!”

the box office but by selling as much popcorn as possible. It's interesting how you shift more popcorn in a film like *Skyfall* as opposed to something like *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* – which was actually our second busiest film of the year – but cakes were the big thing there!

What affects business most: weather, economic climate, or the films themselves?

With us it's the films – customers want to see a particular film here, they're not just searching for a night out. I guess there's always the summer slump, which comes when you have decent weather – but this summer we were pretty busy throughout because it rained a lot. There can be a dearth of titles over summer but we've tried to fight that by showing what's been termed “screen art”, concerts from ▶

The secret life of a movie journalist...

...because it's all a bit weird really

Words: “The critic”

Screenings

Ever wondered how the critics get to see a movie before you? Well, in some posh hotels in central London there are tiny cinemas, with leather seats, beer and nibbles. If you're important enough, the studios will email you an invite to one of these plush places, feed you canapés and pour enough wine down your neck to sweeten your view of their terrible flick. During the film itself certain people talk, Mark Kermode tuts, journalists tweet, moan, and even sometimes leave before the end. I once watched a journalist leave *Inception* before the finale. *Inception*! No doubt he still gave it five stars.

Premieres

If a studio wants you to be really nice about a stinker of a film, they might bribe you with offers of a ticket to a premiere. Film journos are fickle gits. Oddly there's little a surly hack wants to do more in life than sit in Leicester Square next to a former *Big Brother* contestant. The truth is the real stars you see on the red carpet often don't even watch the movie. They go in through the front door, out through the back.

Embargos

Ever wondered why journalists don't tell all about *Spider-Man* when we've been on a set visit two years before release? It's because we have to sign forms saying the studio can cut out our kidneys should we do anything before they say... “it's time”. I was once involved in an exclusive involving a Christian Bale film I'm still too scared to name, and a man in dark sunglasses cupped my balls in case I had any recording devices taped to my scrotum. He patted and squeezed in a very unsexual way. “I have a camera concealed in my anus,” I regret joking.

Junkets

More luxury hotels, more silliness. Journalists are put into packs, squashed around tiny tables and then left alone to simmer for hours on end. Eventually movie stars are fed to us. We all have to interview the star at the same time – it's carnage. Often it's a case of who can shout the loudest, not who can ask the best question. “Who is the movie?” I once heard a Dutch journalist shout at Kiefer Sutherland. Who! Is! The! Movie? It didn't make any kind of sense, yet we all had to go with it. Even Kiefer.

One-on-one Interviews

Sometimes, just sometimes, you might get a proper interview. Twenty minutes in a room; 30 on a phone perhaps; one-on-one – a dream. Yet your star is always jet-lagged, and well trained to spin questions like Tony bastard Blair. If they're Colin Farrell they will smoke. Even when you're in a non-smoking hotel room, and the alarms are going off. “I think the sprinklers are gonna come on!” I may have shouted. “Well then we might get wet,” he replied. Still smoking. Still not giving a solitary shit about my interview.

Glyndebourne, operas, and plays from the Globe. I wouldn't be surprised if that sort of thing featured more in the future of cinema.

Wouldn't you like it if you could book the likes of *Avengers Assemble* and *The Dark Knight Rises* all the time?

I don't think we'd look at it as a new artistic direction for the Little, but there's nothing to stop us if there isn't a suitable title around. The problem with blockbusters is that you have to clear the decks – the moment you get one in you've lost a screen for two weeks. *The Dark Knight Rises* we showed: the first week did good business, but the second week it bombed, and we were locked into it. With *Skyfall* it's worked out really well but it's always a gamble.

What about age ratings – have you ever disagreed with a BBFC rating for one of the films you've shown?

I never used to worry that much but since becoming a parent you do start to think, "Would I like my son to hear M say 'f*ck'?" [in *Skyfall*]. It felt gratuitous. But that's within the guidelines, you can have a 12A with an F-word so I can't really complain. I think by and large the certificates are right, I haven't noticed any glaring errors. We had the [sexually explicit] Michael Winterbottom film *9 Songs* in and I was all set for complaints, but if anything people were disappointed they hadn't gone far enough! It's a broadminded bunch we have here, I'm pleased to say.

What are your personal favourite films?

It changes all the time. We actually showed one on Monday, which was one of the opportunities to stick one of my favourites on screen: *Cinema Paradiso* – great big soggy pile of old tear-sodden emotions, I can't get enough of it. Also *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* – I love Sergio Leone – and probably [1983 Coppola film] *Rumblefish*.

Any sci-fi or fantasy favourites?

Ten years ago in Oxford I did the best thing I've ever done which was programme an all-night SF festival. We had a preview of *28 Days Later* which Danny Boyle came down to introduce, and then we showed a whole bunch of films from the last 20 years. Of those my favourites would be *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*, the Philip Kaufman version, and *The Thing*, the Carpenter one. Apart from that it's perennials like *Alien*, and I have a soft spot for *Predator 2*, much more so than *Predator*...

Where do you see cinema going?

It's tricky. Going back to the 3D thing, cinema has always tried to offer something that you



"Now, what screening of *Skyfall* shall I attend...?"

can't get at home, but nowadays the moment cinemas bring something out you can get it at home as well. I'm sure sooner or later it will be the case that it's all going to be simultaneous everywhere; simultaneous releases all over the world on all formats. Whether that'll matter I don't know. Cinema's going to have its work cut out trying to survive – again it might be at that point that it decides to go down the alternative content route and do more live streaming, concerts, plays and so on.

Smell-o-vision!

The only downside is, again, it'll appear in someone's lounge the day after. It's probably a fruitless route but I'm sure it'll be tried. There's a definite yearning for a more immersive experience, the whole "secret cinema" kind of movements. Maybe there'll be a more theatrical thing going on in the future where people pay

a lot more to be taken out of themselves, that could be a way forward.

What's your snack of choice for a film?

Hah! My snack of choice would be a coffee plus a Honeybuns chocolate caramel shortbread – which we sell in the kiosk for a very reasonable £1.80. What about you?

I actually don't really like to eat cinema snacks when I'm watching a film...

Good for you. You're the sort we wouldn't get many complaints about. We get lots about people noisily stuffing popcorn into their gobs. And I do sympathise. It is annoying but popcorn's mark-up is so huge we've just got to shift it.

Do you show many SF films?

Speaking personally I'd like to show more films like *Prometheus* but again, that didn't do

Terrible film titles
Or: what were they thinking?

Leonard Part 6 (1987)

The Incredibly Strange Creatures Who Stopped Living and Became Mixed-Up Zombies!!! (1964)

Sssssss (1973)

Quantum Of Solace (2008)

xXx (2002)

Eegah (1962)

Zotz! (1962)

Jesse James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter (1966)

Ghost In The Invisible Bikini (1966)

Pacific Rim (2012)

"We showed *The Dark Knight Rises*: the first week did good business, but the second week it bombed"

Complaints to the multiplex

Love them or despise them, most of us depend on giant multiplexes to deliver us our regular dose of Hollywood goodness. But do they give a damn about us, the people they serve?

Words: "Adam"

RE: SKYFALL

Dear Cineworld,
I really love your cinema (Stevenage branch), it is lovely, which is perhaps why I continue to go there nearly every week despite the fact that I once saw a toddler use your lobby area as a toilet. However I have to say my experience at *Skyfall* last night was not so good. His name's Bond. James Bond. Not BOND! JAAAAAMES BOOOOND! Your speakers are loud. Too! Loud! Loud enough perhaps to raise Cubby Broccoli from the dead. During the bit with the Tube train and all the madness and stuff my teeth actually started rattling. I am not young, but I am not an old man – more Daniel Craig than Sean Connery. My teeth should not rattle, Cineworld, nor should my ears ring whole hours later. I do not expect an apology but would like an explanation – please, why so noisy? Also, will you ever be likely to turn shit down in future or will I have to stuff popcorn cornels in my ears if I wish to see *Madagascar 3*?

Regards!
Adam!

RE: SKYFALL

Dear Cineworld Customer,
Please note that due to overwhelming customer response to the release of the film *Skyfall*, we are temporarily receiving more inbound email correspondence than we will be able to respond to. If you need to contact us about an urgent or important matter please contact us by telephone on 0844 815 7747. Even if your enquiry is not urgent, we would politely request that you contact us by telephone rather than by email, so that we will be able to assist you further. If you do choose to contact us by email, we will still endeavour to respond to you within two weeks. We're really sorry for any inconvenience that this temporary interruption to our email service may cause.

Best wishes
Cineworld Customer Services Team

RE: SKYFALL

Dear Cineworld,
Autumn has turned to winter, Bond has turned to DVD, yet nothing. Are you okay? Have you fallen into a popcorn machine? Become trapped under a 3D projector? Have you become stuck to your own sticky floors and are unable to get to a computer to email me/summon help? I ask, not out of genuine

The Name Of The Father partnership of Daniel Day-Lewis and Jim Sheridan, was expected to draw in the crowds. Literally nobody turned up during the matinees on Friday and when the main evening show brought in five punters, the decision was made to pull it. One to which half a dozen customers were attracted, but that not even the talent involved turned up for is *Buffalo 66*, for which Vincent Gallo was supposed to

concern, but because you said you would get back to me "within two weeks" re my issue with my *Skyfall* viewing, yet sadly forever and a day has passed. Talk to me Cineworld, this isn't over.

Love you
Adam

RE: SKYFALL

Thank you for contacting Cineworld. We have received your correspondence and we will aim to respond to you within three working days. If you need to contact us about an urgent or important matter please contact us by telephone on 0844 815 7747. Please note our offices are open: Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5:30pm and Saturdays 10am – 6.30pm.

Best wishes
Cineworld Customer Services Team

RE: SKYFALL, TUES 6 NOVEMBER

Dear Cineworld,
Thanks for your automated response to me, it has the feel of your automated projection systems, which I am a big fan of (honest) – who needs the human touch hey? Talking of the "human touch" I saw two humans touching each other excessively during *The Hobbit*. This is not so much a complaint, but an observation. What, please tell, is the official Cineworld policy on "heavy petting", particularly while wearing 3D glasses?

Speak soon
Adam

RE: SKYFALL

Thank you for contacting Cineworld. We have received your correspondence and we will aim to respond to you within three working days. If you need to contact us about an urgent or important matter please contact us by telephone on 0844 815 7747. Please note our offices are open: Monday – Friday 9:00am to 5:30pm and Saturdays 10am – 6.30pm.

Best wishes
Cineworld Customer Services Team

STOP PRESS!

Just as we were about to send this page to press, Cineworld got in touch, were very nice, and offered free cinema tickets! Which is great – but not quite as amusing a way to end this feature...

be giving an intro. Frantic calls to his PR people revealed that his non-appearance was down to his having gone into the toilet several hours before and refusing to come out. Artists... ☹

Follow the Little Theatre on Twitter – @littletheatreuk – and on Facebook – www.facebook.com/TheLittleTheatreCinema. http://www.picturehouses.co.uk/cinema/The_Little.



particularly well. The difficulty then is that if we want to show something in a similar genre it might be the feeling that unfortunately SF doesn't do particularly well for us. By and large I do enjoy SF and I'd like to do more of it here, it's just a matter of getting people in. If you or your readers have requests by all means send them in.

Have you ever done anything like an all-night horror show?

Closest we came last year was when we did a late-night double-bill of *Carrie* and *Halloween*, the originals. We showed *Carrie* in Screen 2 and brought in a bunch of students from Bath University Student Theatre and they dressed up as horror characters. After *Carrie* we engineered a power cut and screams galore and got everyone to charge downstairs where we unearthed a derelict cinema covered in sheets and cobwebs. And they sat down and watched *Halloween*. It goes back to the whole immersive thing that there might be more of in the future. Very tiring though. I'd love to do more horror – *The Shining* sold out this Halloween. The problem is a lot of new horror films are just a bit crap.

Ever had literally no one turn up for a film?

The least popular film I've ever shown was *The Boxer*, which, given that it reunited the *In*

D IS FOR

When is a film an *SFX* film? It's a trickier decision than you might imagine...

Words: Russell Lewin

SFX

DO WE THINK IT'S US?

"Do we think it's us?" is a question that's heard a lot at *SFX* editorial meetings. It's when we look at upcoming films and try to decide whether their content is fantastical enough to warrant a place in the hallowed pages of our magazine. Some aren't difficult to decide upon: a film entitled *The Six Headed Invader From Beyond Venus* is likely to be "us". But some recent ones, like *The Three Musketeers*, *Life*

Of Pi and *Beasts Of The Southern Wild*, haven't been so clear-cut.

So here we look at films that have led to furious arguments in the office – ooh, there was blood on the walls, so there was – and get the defence and prosecution to make their cases, before deciding on whether or not they should be allowed into the *SFX* universe.



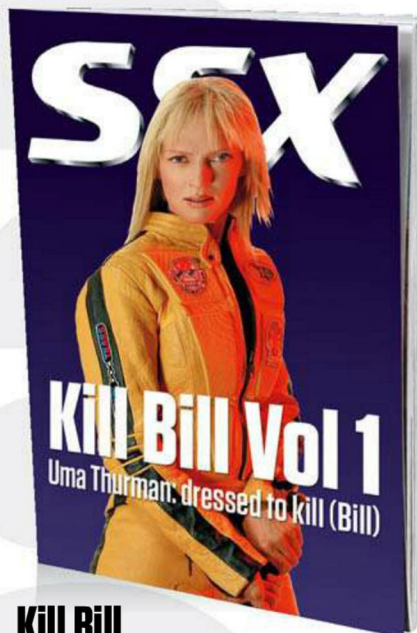
Hugo (2011)

YES! Features an automaton – what is effectively a robot in 1930s Paris!

NO! The automaton is barely in the film! Or at least scenes where it actually moves are very few. And it has no supernatural qualities – it's presented as an object that's constructed by a person adept at the construction of mechanical objects.

VERDICT

The automaton does not constitute enough of a "not real" figure to justify its inclusion in *SFX*. Er, even though we reviewed it twice.



Kill Bill Volume 1 (2003)

YES! Steps into the realms of fantasy with scenes like the Bride taking on and defeating hundreds of sword-wielding ninjas.

NO! The action is wild, yes, but it's only a slightly more exaggerated version of what used to happen in Bruce Lee films.

VERDICT

Like other Tarantinos, it takes place in a different sort of reality (like *Inglourious Basterds*), but that's never been enough for *SFX*.



The Adventures Of Tintin: The Secret Of The Unicorn (2011)

YES! A fantasy adventure in the same vein as director Spielberg's other fantasy adventures like *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

NO! The difference between this and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* is that there are supernatural elements present in *Raiders*.

VERDICT

Okay, it got a review, but we say that it's not us!



The Mission Impossible films (1996-)

YES! If *SFX* covers James Bond then why, pray, will it not cover *Mission: Impossible*? The masks alone are sci-fi worthy!

NO! Most James Bond films aren't science fiction, and nor are the *Mission: Impossible* films, they're just spy films with a few clever gadgets here and there.

VERDICT

Close, but they're more action adventures than fantasy action adventures.



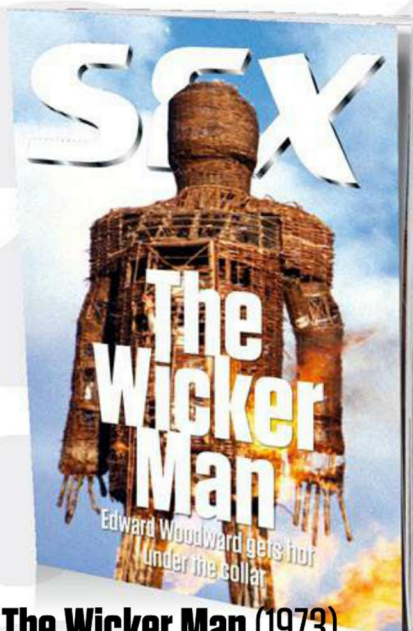
Up (2009)

YES! It has dogs that fly aeroplanes and a man whose house flies away when he attaches balloons to its roof.

NO! *SFX* doesn't do the "talking animal" business – that's not enough to get you in the magazine. With animation you could argue that almost any are "us".

VERDICT

You've surely got to slot this into *SFX*, no? One of our magazine rivals covered it, that's for sure. We'd have to draw the line at something like *Pocahontas* though.



The Wicker Man (1973)

YES! Been in *SFX* a lot over the years! A horror film which concerns disturbing, supernatural-based elements.

NO! No supernatural elements whatsoever! It's not as if it's like *The Exorcist*, *The Omen* or *Rosemary's Baby*, where the supernatural elements are to the fore.

VERDICT

Looking back through old *SFX* issues reveals that this film has always been treated as "us" – there have been several features and reviews. So maybe we're a prisoner of history on this one...

Further examples to keep the arguments raging...

Black Swan (2010)

YES! A disturbed ballerina sprouts feathers and has nightmarish and horrific experiences.

NO! It's all in her mind! All in the mind.

Airplane! (1980)

YES! There's madness and fantasy everywhere, from Otto, the blow-up co-pilot with a mind of his own, to the Russian dancing and the old lady hanging herself.

NO! Everything's done for comic purposes: it may well be the funniest film ever, but that doesn't make it us.



The Three Musketeers (2011)

YES! Steampunk paraphernalia like giant anachronistic airships and machine-guns.

NO! Will always remain too steeped in Dumas's original, which certainly ain't fantasy.

300 (2006)

YES! The battle of Thermopylae is retold by a lone survivor, who exaggerates it to the point of legend – a million Persians with battle elephants invade a hyperreal Greece.

NO! A homoerotic fantasy perhaps. The highly stylised way it's shot does not make the actual content fantasy.

The Red Shoes (1948)

YES! A Hans Christian Anderson fairytale about a ballerina influenced by a demonic Svengali.

NO! Great drama but not explicitly supernatural.

The Lone Ranger (2013)

To be confirmed!

Star Trek Into Darkness (2013)

Oh, do shut up

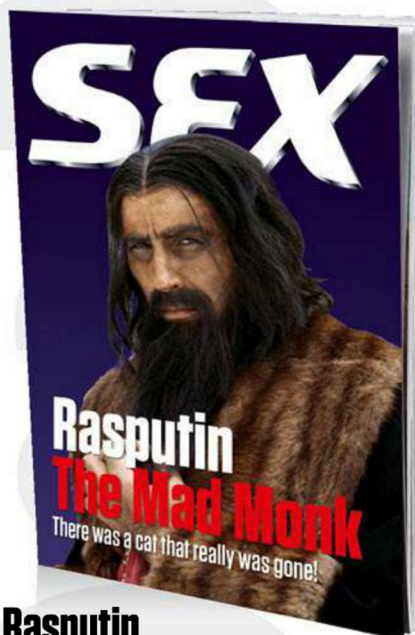
THE BIG QUESTION

If you have a franchise that generally isn't fantastical, but has ONE entry that IS fantastical, does that mean the entire franchise counts as genre? We went on the streets and asked the Great British Public!

Here are their answers:

No
Yes
No
No
No
Yes
Yes
No
Yes
Maybe

Join us next week for more sensational BIG QUESTIONS answered!



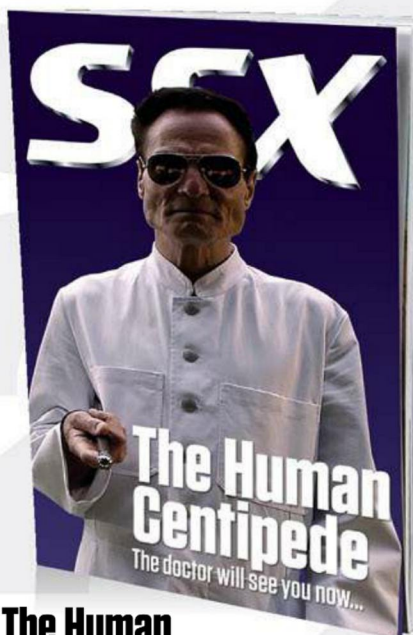
Rasputin The Mad Monk (1966)

YES! Hammer took the historical tale and souped it up to make the titular character near-indestructible. There's no way a normal man could survive what he gets put through.

NO! He wasn't a normal man though, he was an incredibly strong man – but not a supernatural being. And he *doesn't* survive!

VERDICT

We'd love to, but, but... if only he actually died and *then* came back to life.



The Human Centipede (2010)

YES! It's about a mad doctor who stitches people together, arse to mouth, creating something of a monster...

NO! "Medically 100% accurate", thereby disqualifying it from *SFX*...

VERDICT

100% accurate, eh? Mmmm. Even if it was, no one's ever tried it in real life. Or hopefully would. For that reason, and not just because it's a bona fide, twisted horror film, it's "us".

DISASTER MOVIES DISSECTED

Just how many have to die before we sit up and take notice? How bad does a disaster have to be before us heartless souls at SFX will cover it? Pretty bad, as this graph demonstrates



Illustrations: Mark Mitchell

OTHER GENRES ARE RUBBISH!

Bobby Furious lays into anything that isn't SFX

WESTERNS

Booooooring! There's a reason Westerns died out. They're simplistic and cheap and are generally set in one dry, dusty town; their action is repetitive and predictable. One of the best Westerns of them all is actually sci-fi: *Westworld*!

FILM NOIR

Dull dull dull. Hard to see, hard to care about. Half of them have such twisted and complicated plots it's impossible to work out who's done what to who and where and why. And there's lots of smoking in them. Smoking is horrible.

MUSICALS

So you're going about your daily business in the city and suddenly someone bursts into song. And then everyone else bursts into song too! And starts dancing around like idiots.

WAR FILMS

Isn't life grim enough without watching people being blown to bits? They're grey, gritty, noisy – and you usually know the ending and who won. Quite often they go on for bloody hours too, feeling as long as the wars they're covering.

CRIME

Crime doesn't pay. Or entertain.

SCI-FI or RELIGION?

Here's a fun game: try and work out whether the outlines of these plots or beliefs relate to an SF film or a religious belief system. Answers are at the bottom of the page. You won't get them all right!

- 1 Xenu was an alien ruler of the "Galactic Confederacy." Seventy-five million years ago Xenu brought billions of people to Earth in spacecraft, stacked them around volcanoes and detonated hydrogen bombs in the volcanoes.
- 2 Extraterrestrial civilisations operate a fleet of spaceships orbiting the Earth. They help the good and are waiting to transport their followers into another dimension.
- 3 Prince Philip is a divine being, the pale-skinned son of a mountain spirit and brother of John Frum.
- 4 Each person has seven clones living in different parts of the world.
- 5 Nikola Tesla is from the planet Venus.
- 6 The planet Kolob is the planet nearest to the throne of God.

ANSWERS 1 Religion: Scientology 2 Religion: Universe Nuwabianism 3 Religion: Prince Philip Movement 4 Religion: Nuwabianism 5 Religion: Nuwabianism 6 Religion: Mormonism. Yep, they're all religion! Crazy, huh?



BRITSCIFI

09-10 March 2013 • 10:00 - 17:00



Paul Darrow - Blake's 7



Robert Llewellyn - Red Dwarf



Chris Barrie - Red Dwarf



Danny John Jules - Red Dwarf



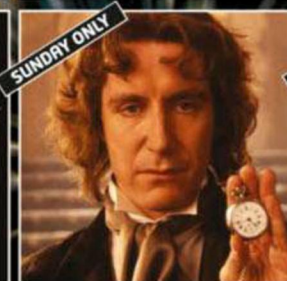
Zienia Merton - Space: 1999, Doctor Who



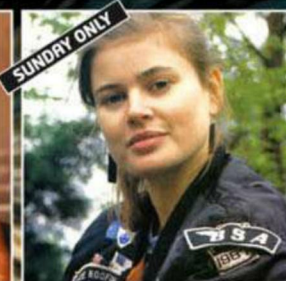
Prentis Hancock - Space: 1999, Doctor Who



Colin Baker - Doctor Who



Paul McGann - Doctor Who, Minister of Chance



Sophie Aldred - Doctor Who, Minister of Chance



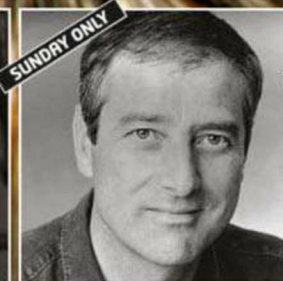
Lee Sullivan - UK Comic Strip Artist: 2000AD, Transformers



Nick Briggs - Doctor Who, Torchwood



Lauren Crace - Minister of Chance, Eastenders



Julian Wadham - Minister of Chance

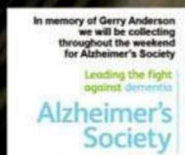


Minister of Chance

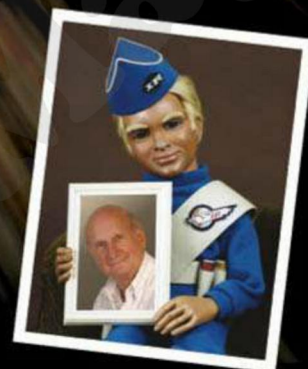
- Daleks, Cybermen, Doctors and other characters
- Children's costume competitions
- Talks, workshops and craft tables

- Huge British Science Fiction Displays
- Meet Mat Irvine with the original K9 and ORAC

This event is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Gerry Anderson...



- Meet Parker, Penelope and Angels up close
- Blast off with your favourite Thunderbird craft
- See Stingray, Fireball XL5 and FAB1
- A full size recreation of the Moonbase Control Centre from Space 1999
- Q&A hosted by Jamie Anderson and friends



For full details of event and times/dates of appearances visit
www.spacecentre.co.uk • 0845 605 2001

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E
IS FOR

EVIL TWINS

PLUS

**Doppelgängers
and clones!
Cinema is full of
them. We take a
trip through some
of the films having
double trouble...**

Words: Will Salmon

The double is one of cinema's most well-worn tropes. Be it in the form of twins, alien clones, robot duplicates or occasionally someone going a bit nuts. By their very nature, SF, fantasy and horror are the ideal genres to tell these stories in – you've got a raft of handy explanations and a world where two (or more!) versions of the same person knocking about is a credible occurrence.

SINISTER SIBLINGS

Of course, the most believable explanation for two people looking exactly the same is that they're identical twins. There are surprisingly few films that focus exclusively on a pair of twins being evil. More often, one will be good, while the other is a bit of a wrong 'un. That's certainly the case with *Twins Of Evil* (1971) – a classic slice of Hammer horror, starring Peter Cushing and real-life sisters (not to mention former *Playboy* Playmates) Mary and Madeleine Collinson. The rebellious Frieda is





“The twins’ brief dialogue has been parodied and homaged in everything from *Spaced* to *Family Guy*”

turned into a vampire by the wicked Count Karnstein. Her sister Maria, on the other hand, is a gentle soul and opposes them. An odd collision of the witch-finder and vampire genres, it's not in the top flight of Hammer flicks, but is thoroughly enjoyable all the same. There's some lush set design, and the twins are undeniably alluring. Weirdly, Hammer have just released a novelisation by Shaun Hutson.

One year later, Robert Mulligan's *The Other* (1972), followed a similar pattern. Identical twins Niles and Holland Perry live in rural

America. But while they seem harmless enough, a series of mysterious deaths suggests that something sinister is going on. Mulligan dresses the twins similarly, making it difficult to tell which is which, and a final reveal complicates things further. Slowly paced, it's a film that brims with menace and hints of rural witchcraft. An understated and underrated film.

In Brian De Palma's *Sisters* (1973) there's nothing supernatural or science fictional going on, but it's an effective slice of Hitchcockian horror all the same. De Palma even went so far as

to hire Hitch's favoured composer, Bernard Herrmann, who turns in a typically brooding score. Margot Kidder plays both twins, Danielle and Dominique, with a certain high-pitched intensity. It's nicely shot, but the plot relies a little too much on characters making bone-headed mistakes. Philip, the film's initial victim, accidentally washes Danielle's medicine down the sink, instigating his own murder. The police fail to spot a massive bloodstain on a sofa, and reporter Grace accidentally destroys a vital piece of evidence. A competent 2006 remake starred Chloë Sevigny as Grace, and Lou Doillon as Angélique/Annabel.

The most iconic twins in cinema are surely the ghostly Grady daughters in Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining* (1980). In a film full of startling and memorable images (a wave of blood, Jack Nicholson leering through an axe hole in a door, the chase through the frozen maze) they're the most iconic of all. Young Danny's encounter with them in the corridors of the Overlook Hotel is a classic horror moment and Lisa and Louise Burns's brief dialogue, “Danny, come and play with us... forever and ever” has been parodied and homaged in everything from *Spaced* and *Family Guy* to adverts for Bing. As with all of Kubrick's work, the scene is meticulously composed, perfectly paced, and the juxtaposition of Danny's face with the girls' bloodied corpses is deeply unsettling.

The Evil Twin (2007) is a South Korean ghost story, and once again one of the twins is good, the other not so nice. So-yeon awakes from a coma, ten years after an accident that claimed the life of her sister, Hyo-jin. When people suddenly start to die around her, the locals suspect her of foul play. But it doesn't take a genius to work out who the real killer is... Plot wise, this is fairly standard stuff, and yes, the ghost is of the spooky long-haired girl variety, but the period setting is distinctive, and there are some pleasingly brutal moments.

More recently, *Seconds Apart* (2011) – a DTV movie in the After Dark Originals series – featured Edmund and Gary Entin as a pair of murderous telepathic twins called Jonah and Seth (why do these people always have such biblical names? It's never Barry and Clive, is it?). Antonio Negret's direction is slick, and the twins genuinely quite creepy. It's a dark and depressing film – but also a cut above the usual DTV fare. ▶



Margot Kidder anxious in *Sisters*.



How could we ignore 2007's *The Evil Twin*?



Terrifying telepathy in *Seconds Apart*.

ROBOTS & CLONES

Of course, in science fiction there are many other ways to cause double trouble. In **Invasion Of The Body Snatchers** (1956), alien pods land on Earth and replace people with eerie living replicas. Brimming with paranoia and still genuinely spooky, the film was a huge success. A surprisingly bleak ending adds to the sense of all-pervading, inescapable horror. It was remade several times – most notably by Philip Kaufman, whose excellent 1978 version notches up the horror by several degrees.



The Stepford Wives, post "makeover".

Like *Body Snatchers*, **The Stepford Wives** (1975) is rooted in the everyday world – which makes the ultimate reveal of murderous robot doubles all the more shocking. The final scene, where the protagonist encounters a black-eyed copy of herself, is a chilling punchline to a pointed satire about suburban conformity and societal pressures. Likewise, **The Boys From Brazil** (1978) looks like a standard issue thriller about Nazis hiding in Paraguay, until it becomes apparent that they have cloned Hitler 94 times (!) in an attempt to re-establish the Third Reich. As evil plots go, that's a good 'un – though you do wonder how well Hitler would get on with so many versions of himself. Fine performances from Gregory Peck and Laurence Olivier help mask the inherent daftness of the premise.

Even odder was **The Clones Of Bruce Lee** (1981). This concerns three crime-fighting copies of the deceased kung fu master. It's a crass, exploitative bit of tat, designed to cash in on the star's early death. Still, it's quite a fun idea. Unfortunately, once you get past the WTF factor, the film (which stars Lee impersonators Dragon Lee, Bruce Le and Bruce Lai) is fairly monotonous and dull. Even the scrapping is forgettable.

Star Trek: Nemesis (2002) is the tenth *Trek* motion picture, and widely considered the worst (though personally we'd pick *Insurrection* for that dubious accolade). The nemesis of the title is Shinzon, a Romulan clone of Captain Picard who, oddly, looks cock all like Patrick Stewart, even accounting for the age difference. We also meet B-4, an android relative of Data. The early scenes between Stewart and then-newcomer Tom Hardy are electric, showing two sides of the same personality at war. Unfortunately, the film constantly reminds you how evil Shinzon is, killing any sympathy you might feel for the character.

The scenes with B-4, meanwhile, are just dreadful. *Star Trek* was rarely any good at comedy, and having Brent Spiner trot out lines like "why do you have a shiny head?" is just embarrassing. Highly disposable.

The two *Matrix* sequels, **The Matrix Reloaded** (2003) and **The Matrix Revolutions** (2003) were equally flimsy, but feature a plethora of doubles. *Reloaded* introduces us to the ghostly Twins, played by Neil and Adrian Rayment (formerly of Carol Vorderman's *Better Homes*!). These dreadlocked dudes are assassins with the ability to make themselves incorporeal. But while they look striking (a stark white contrast to the standard issue black clobber everyone else is wearing), they do little damage, and don't appear in the final instalment. Hugo Weaving's Agent Smith, on the other hand, is all over the two films. He replicates himself throughout the *Matrix* until there are literally millions of Smiths pitted against Keanu Reeves' Neo. More Weaving is usually a good thing, but this was perhaps a step too far – and the comically rubbery effects in the infamous "burly brawl" scene in *Reloaded* don't do the film any favours.

Probably the best modern science fiction film about a doppelgänger is Duncan Jones' debut feature, **Moon** (2009). Made for just \$5,000,000 it successfully

captures the sense of isolation that made *Silent Running* and *2001* so memorable. Sam Rockwell gives an astonishing performance as Sam Bell, a space miner alone on the Moon who suddenly – and literally – comes face-to-face with himself. Has he gone mad? Is this part of some crazy experiment? And can he trust his double? The answers are satisfying, and the film's space setting is utterly convincing, despite the lack of cash. Rockwell was rightly nominated for a Bafta, and Jones went on to make the more high-profile, if less unique, *Source Code* – which starred just one Jake Gyllenhaal.

WATCH THE REAL BRUCE LEE DESTROY HIS CLONES
IN THE
GREATEST DEATH FIGHT EVER!



"THE CLONES OF BRUCE LEE"
THE FURY OF LEE TIMES THREE!



Two Jeremy Irons take a nap in *Dead Ringers*.

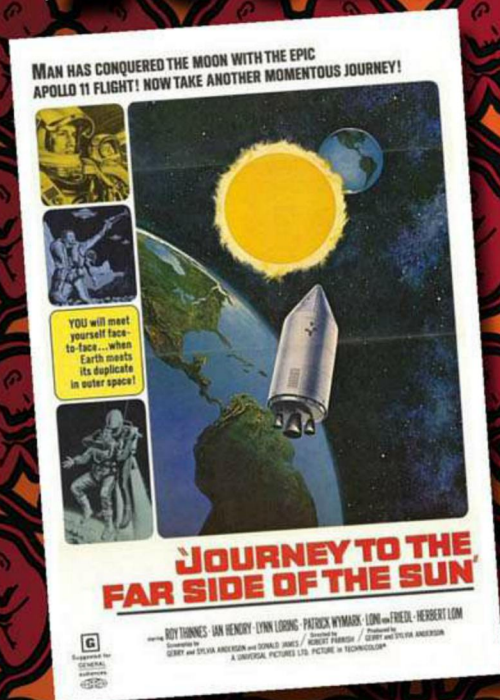
DOWN-TO-EARTH DOUBLES

There are several films outside of SF, fantasy and horror that make use of sinister twins and doppelgängers. Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988) is a portrait of two identical twins who grow up to be gynaecologists who exploit their similarities and manipulate women. Jeremy Irons puts in a chilling performance as both of the twins. *The Double Life Of Véronique* (1991) is directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski – most famous for the fantastic *Three Colours* trilogy. Irène Marie Jacob plays Weronika and Véronique, two identical women leading separate – yet connected – lives in France and Poland. And Darren Aaronofsky's award-winning *Black Swan* (2010) finds Natalie Portman's Nina going bonkers, with both a metaphorical double in the form of Mila Kunis's Lily, and several scenes where she sees visions of another version of herself.



Sam Rockwell's strange trip to the Moon.

DOUBLE VISION



You can also blame doubles on madness, parallel universes and alien chemicals. *Doppelgänger*, aka *Journey To The Far Side Of The Sun* (1969) was an attempt by Gerry Anderson to produce an adult science fiction movie. It concerns a manned mission to investigate a planet on the other side of the Sun. When the craft gets there, the crew discover another Earth with duplicates of everyone from our world. It's fairly ponderous stuff, though as ever with Anderson's stuff, the tech looks good.

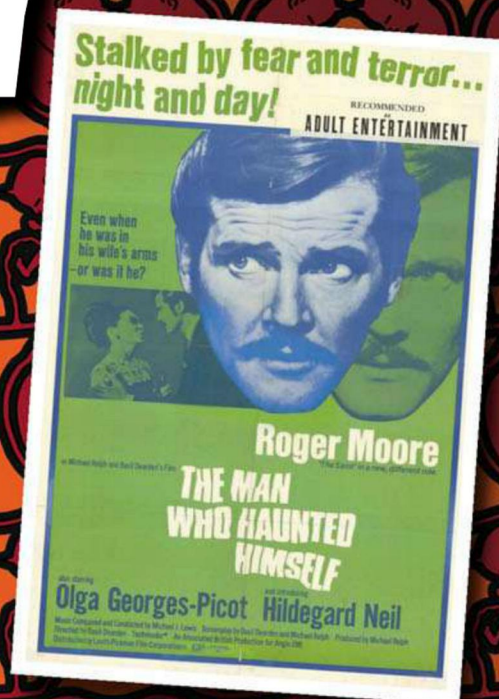


Much better is *The Man Who Haunted Himself* (1970), starring Roger Moore, post-*The Saint*, but pre-James Bond. Based on Anthony Armstrong's novel *The Case Of Mr Pelham*, Moore plays a straight-laced businessman recovering from a nasty accident. It's not long, however, before Harold Pelham's world falls apart. People claim to have seen him in places where he hasn't been, and a beautiful stranger reckons he's had sex with her. Pelham's wife is not impressed! Is he mad, or is there really a double running around having all the fun? Moore puts in a fine performance as the two Pelhams, alternately strutting and tormented, and the film keeps you guessing about his mental state right until the final few scenes.

Less impressive is *Superman 3* (1983). After the highly regarded first two flicks, the franchise came undone with this daft, overly-comedic caper. In it, Clark Kent is corrupted by Kryptonite, becoming selfish. Struggling to control himself, Clark literally splits into two Supermen, who then engage in a junkyard battle. Evil Superman (scowly, kiss curl a bit out of whack) is chunked in a vat of acid, while Good Superman (handily wearing his Clark Kent clobber) gets trapped in a crusher. This scene is the highlight in an otherwise poor movie – though the fact that it ends with Clark literally strangling his evil twin to death is a little disconcerting.

Army Of Darkness (1992) – Sam Raimi's third *Evil Dead* film finds the (by now deranged) Ash transported back in time and facing an army of the dead. If that wasn't enough, he's also tied up, Gulliver style, by a gang of tiny Ash's, and then a full-sized duplicate of himself – Bad Ash. Handily, our hero is toting his boom-stick and makes short work of his enemy, leading to the immortal line, "Good? Bad? I'm the guy with the gun".

Bone-headed, post-*Matrix* action flick *The One* (2001) features Jet Li fighting himself across parallel realities. The psychotic YuLaw (Li) has discovered that for every version of himself that he kills, he gets stronger. It's not long, however, before he comes up against Gabe – a goodie-two-shoes mirror of himself, who also



Bringing things up to date, Richard Ayoade's follow-up to his cult hit *Submarine* is an adaptation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novella *The Double*. The new film finds *The Social Network*'s Jesse Eisenberg cracking up when an exact double starts working in the same building. *Submarine* was a cracker, so we have high hopes for this one...@

“The film keeps you guessing about Roger Moore’s mental state right until the final few scenes”



happens to be a cop. Bullets fly in slow motion. The soundtrack is, inevitably, chugging metal and Jet Li is wooden as one lead, let alone two.

More thoughtful was *MirrorMask* (2005). Penned by Neil Gaiman, and with visuals by his *Sandman* collaborator Dave McKean, this was intended to be a modern-day *Labyrinth*. Young Helena finds herself trapped in a fantasy world, following the hospitalisation of her mother. There she finds people from her everyday life transformed into different characters – and an Anti-Helena who breaks through into our world. There's some nice ideas, and McKean's visuals are striking, but it doesn't quite hang together, lacking the charm of the movies that inspired it. It's also got the most irritating score...



Coming soon: the Editor fighting his evil twin!

FANS

WITHOUT THE FANS, WHERE'D CINEMA BE? NOWHERE! SO LET'S CHAT TO SIX OF THE MOST DEDICATED

Words: David Cromarty

In early autumn last year we put out a call on our website (<http://www.sfx.co.uk>) asking for the planet's most obsessive and committed film fans. From the huge

response we got we picked out half a dozen of the finest examples of passionate, knowledgeable and, well, fun, folk with an interest in the movies to tell us more about the

lengths they've gone to in pursuit of their filmic goals.

So sit back and enjoy their ramblings, and remember: you are not alone.

Harold Withers, Manchester

KNOWS MORE ABOUT STAR WARS THAN GEORGE LUCAS

Why did you apply to be in this feature?

I'm a bit of a *Star Wars* freak, so reading your piece I thought there's quite a few things I've done in the past. I've always loved *Star Wars*, from four years old.

Tell us a bit more about your main interest.

I've always had an interest in the movies. It's one of the reasons I became an artist. My career was inspired by the work of Ralph McQuarrie. I went to college, did illustration, then got into computer graphics, and started working on computer games.

What would you say is the single most dedicated thing you've done for your film passion?

Being a videogame artist, I've combined the two passions. Together with friends and colleagues across the world, we've created a modification for a *Star Wars* game for *Battlefield 2142*. It's called *First Strike*, and it's lots of friends who contribute either *Star Wars* lore or assets and game design, and basically build a game so people can play the best *Star Wars* game they can. It'll be worth the wait when it comes out, but it's gonna take a long time to get done. It's been about a year we've been working on it now. We're trying to make it the most accurate version of the Hoth sequence that we can.

Can you put a cost on your passion?

I couldn't tell you. It's got to be thousands of pounds over the years. I've been a collector from a very young age as well. On the art side, there's all the art books and, when I was a kid, all the *Star Wars* figures. In my mum's loft there's still a lot of that. I've gotta get it transferred to my current house at some point, but it's a matter of convincing my wife that there's space. One of the nicest things in my collection is my original 1978 *Star Wars* annual. I got a new version recently which is in pristine condition, but I've still got my original one where the hardback's been ripped off and with my felt-tip pen stick figure rendition of Darth Vader. It's my earliest *Star Wars* art.

Ever had a big argument with someone who hasn't shared your interests?

I wouldn't say argument. Apart from the wife trying to get me to sell them all. She says it should go towards the baby's college fund. I've been getting a bit of earache every now and then. She says when I'm not looking she's going to start selling my stuff. I said, "Don't you bloody dare!"

Ever had a pub quiz round you've aced?

There was a *Star Wars* Celebration Europe event, and there was a *Star Wars* Mastermind going on. They were doing an online pre-test before you went to the actual event. You had to go online at a certain time and answer questions, and the mark you got would determine if you got to be one of the top five who'd get the chance to be the Mastermind. I thought, "I can do that," because I'm fairly knowledgeable about that sort of thing. I didn't get a question wrong. But right in the middle of the quiz, my internet cut out. I tried to get back online so I could submit my answers, but the connection had gone. I didn't get any marks!

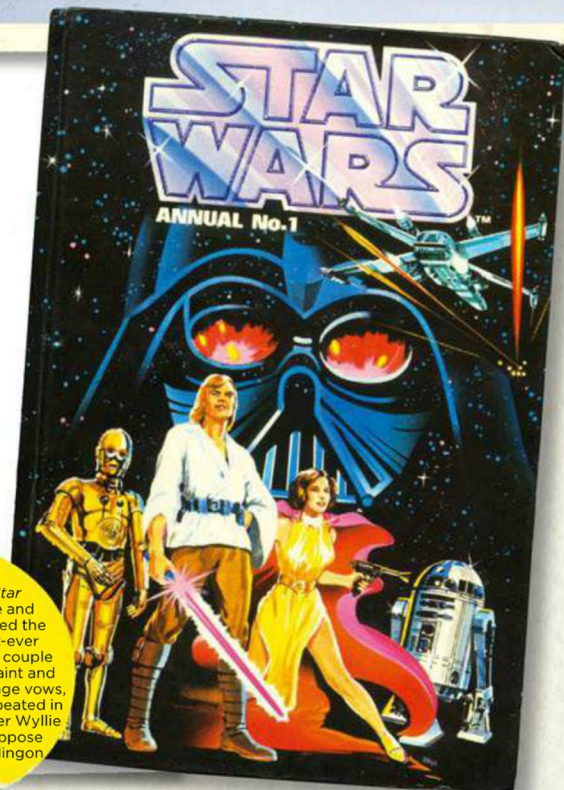
What's your all-time favourite film?

The Empire Strikes Back. I think for these new films, if Disney takes note of what *Empire* got right – which is pretty much everything – if it can get that balance of George Lucas's storyline, a decent writer who can write dialogue, and a decent director who can get the best performances out of his actors, you'd get something really special.

What will you refuse to watch?

I'd give anything a shot. I was gutted when my wife's friend turned her on to *Twilight*. I've been forced to watch it on DVD or Sky Movies, but with the new one coming out at the cinema I think she's going to drag me to see that. She's bearing my child, I suppose I can give her this one thing.

HAROLD NABBED BY STORMTROOPERS!



FANS' PASSION

In October 2012 *Star Trek* fanatics Jossie and Sonnie Gustavsson tied the knot in the UK's first-ever Klingon wedding. The couple donned brown face-paint and rubber masks to exchange vows, some of which were repeated in Klingon. Celebrant Peter Wyllie said: "Nobody can oppose the beating of two Klingon hearts."



HAROLD'S STAR WARS GAME EVOLVES...



RIDLEY SCOTT SMILING SHOCKER!

Mark McManus, Huddersfield

THE ALIEN FAN WHO NAMED HIS SON RIDLEY

Tell us a bit more about your main interest.

The main interest is *Prometheus*. I've always been a huge Ridley Scott fan and I was running a blog that was tracking the production on *Predators*. Around the middle of 2009, Fox announced that it'd be making an *Alien* prequel. I quickly rejigged the blog to focus on that and it went from there. From then until the release of the film I was following it closely.

What's the single most dedicated thing you've done for your film passion?

In April 2012 they had the press event where they showed 15 minutes of the film, and there was a Q&A with Ridley Scott and the stars. I got an invite to that and managed to get on the front row. That was something I wasn't expecting when I started the website!

Can you put a cost on your passion?

It's not that expensive. The cost for things like domain names for the website, hosting for it, technical costs, are pretty low. A few pounds a month. In terms of time, things have quietened down now, but in the run up to the release of the film, I spent more and more time doing it. I got a lot of links from different readers, which was very helpful. But it did get to the point where I was looking forward to the film coming out and not having to do anything for a while!

Ever had an argument with someone who hasn't shared your interests?

Most people who know me know that I've been running the website. If they disagree with me,



I think they worry about having to admit that they've disagreed. Someone at work just saw *Prometheus*, and she was very apologetic that she didn't like it. I'm like, "It's alright, you don't have to apologise. It's just a film."

How much has the internet changed your life?

In terms of film companies, the work they're doing now using social media is incredible. I've never seen anything like the marketing of *Prometheus*. In the first ad break during an episode of *Homeland*, Channel Four showed the new trailer with a Twitter hashtag on the screen, then the next ad break they displayed a load of responses to it. That had never been done before. The internet just takes over, basically.

Would you say there have been any problems associated with your interest?

My site was the first anywhere to publish pictures from the set. I got sent two pictures that had been taken of the sets anonymously. In the background there was a piece of very Giger-esque set design on the wall. I put those online, and within two hours I got an email from a lawyer at Twentieth Century Fox. Not a very happy lawyer. That was quite a hair-raising evening. He was quite insistent that I tell him who'd sent the pictures, and I thought, "There's only so many times I can tell you that I don't know." That went on for a few days, and I was glad when it was over.

What's your all-time favourite film?

Although I'm a huge Ridley Scott fan, my favourite is actually *Alien 3*. I'm a David Fincher fan as well. It's the best looking of all the films. The photography and the set design's just fantastic. I liked it anyway, but the extended cut is by far the best of the series. It's so miserable – it doesn't let you off with a happy ending, which I think for a big studio film is quite brave.

What will you refuse to watch?

Barbarella. I can't stand it. I've watched 15 minutes of it, and it irritates the hell out of me.



SCOTT, RAPACE, FASSBENDER, THERON.

Mark Pengelly, Somerset

HAS BEEN IN THE CINEMA SINCE
STAR WARS' FIRST RUN

What is the single most dedicated thing that you've done for your film passion?

I think the strangest thing I've done was for a New Year's Eve party when I decided to dress up as Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. I made the face part of it out of a couple of shammy leathers. I really wanted to make it as authentic as possible, so I bought a brand new apron, took it to a butcher's shop and asked them if they could wear it during the day and rub their hands over it and give it a real stain. Instead, they took it to a slaughterhouse, put it on, and all their mates threw blood all over it. So when it came back to me, it was literally saturated in blood. It really did look good.

Can you put a cost on your passion?

I couldn't, I've spent so much over the years. I've had thousands of DVDs. I collect models, ones you put together. I've spent thousands of pounds on this kind of stuff. There's no one specific thing I stay on. I've got things on *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*, *Shaun Of The Dead*, anything I can get hold of. A lot of it's up in the roof unfortunately, because I have children now.

What's your all-time favourite film?

I like too many. At the minute I'm watching *The Wrath Of Khan* - I've seen that countless times. I'm watching *Star Wars* on my new projector as well. I don't really have a specific all-time film because I like so many different styles.

What will you refuse to watch?

AI. I had to go and see it at the cinema because it was a friend's birthday. That was a couple of hours of painful torture. I'd watch pretty much anything, but I'd refuse to watch that again.



MARK'S (SHAMMY)
LEATHERFACE.

FANS' PASSION

August 2012 saw 600 *Star Wars* fans feast on a 6-foot 7-inch Darth Vader cake, complete with edible strawberry lightsaber and marshmallow fondant cape. The 500lb sweet treat was constructed by 10 bakers over two weeks following four months of planning. Some 386 eggs were involved in its making.

What
happened
is true.

Now the
motion
picture
that's
just as
real!

America's most
bizarre and
brutal crimes!...

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

FANS' PASSION

Jordan Houtz of Arizona, USA, is such a *Lord Of The Rings* fan that she went under the knife to have her ears surgically altered to look like elf ears. Jordan told ABC's *Good Morning show*: "It just fits my personality", but experts warned that the Tolkien obsessive risks deformity and infection.



MEETING
ANOTHER
HORROR ICON.



THE HORROR,
THE HORROR.





Vicky Folksman, Liverpool

LOVES BACK TO THE FUTURE: EVEN KNOWS JENNIFER PARKER'S GRANDMA'S PHONE NUMBER

Tell us more about your main interest...

I love the *Back To The Future* movies. I've loved them since I was a girl. It first came out when I was seven. Me and my mum used to love watching *Family Ties* and we were huge Michael J Fox fans, so she rented *Back To The Future* for us as a treat. We lost my mum when I was 11. It's one of my proper standout childhood memories of my mum; we all sat together as a family and watched *Back To The Future*. The sequel came out the year that my mum died. Again, me and my little brother loved them. I know a lot of fans are a bit iffy about *Part II* but because we were kids, the childish, almost comic nature of the future in *Part II* really appealed to us.

What would you say is the single most dedicated thing you've done for your film passion?

I've been to both Florida and LA Universals to go on the *BTTF* rides before they were torn down. The backlot at Universal was closed filming some bloody Tom Cruise movie the day I was there – it may have been *War Of The Worlds* – so I never got to see the famous Courtyard Square! Gutted! I'm hoping to get to LA again for Future Day (21 October 2015), so I hope hope hope that the Square is open that day so I can see it!

Can you put a cost on your passion?

I don't know about a cost, but my memories of being a fan are priceless. I've got the four-video box set, I've got individual videos, three different types of DVD box set, the Blu-ray box set. I've also got a script hand-signed by Michael J Fox and Christopher Lloyd. I'm also watching a project called *We're Going Back*. They're planning to do a trawl around the locations in Pasadena and Whittier High School and the old church hall where the "Enchantment Under the Sea" dance was. They're going to hold a re-enactment of the dance, so we're hoping to go out there. We want to get George and Lorraine costumes made up for the dance. Maybe that'll be something I have to spend a decent amount of money on. When I was

younger my dad used to work a lot on Friday and Saturday nights, so our treat was renting *Back To The Future Part II*. We rented it so many times – every Friday and Saturday night for a year, I think – that the shop gave it to us.

Ever had a huge argument with someone who hasn't shared your interests?

No, but I've argued about facts and actors and things. A friend of mine didn't believe Billy Zane was in *Back To The Future*, so I had to sit her down and point him out. I had to point out Elijah Wood was in *Back To The Future Part II* as well.



How much has the internet changed your life?

Massively. The internet is what keeps the new things going. I follow all the different projects and events. In particular, there's the time machine restoration project by Joe Walser and Terry Matalas. They're leading the project to give the DeLorean a museum-quality restoration, back to the condition it was in the first movie. They put out an appeal by Bob Gale for anyone who worked in production who ended up with pieces. Someone saved the original flux capacitor, and the original time circuits and stuff. People from all over America are sending bits back to Bob Gale so that they can put the time machine back together. Every single day someone finds something new or posts a story. I'm watching that really closely and I'm hoping to go out to America and see it in all its glory.

Ever had a pub quiz round you've aced?

I can't remember offhand, but I'm sure there have been questions. My brother Dave and I won three different times at Haven Holidays in Torquay over the years when we were teens, singing "Johnny B Goode" at their talent shows – him on guitar and us both on vocals.

Have there been any problems associated with your interest?

No, my boyfriend is very accommodating. They showed the three movies back to back in New Brighton on a rainy late September day. New Brighton is a good hour and a half commute from us, on two different trains. It was a Sunday, and the trains were off and it was chucking it down, and he still went with me.

Diff's AUTOMOTIVE DETAILING
Hill Valley, California
Tel: 840-3051

FANS' PASSION
In 2011 *RoboCop* fans set up a fund to erect a statue of the crime-busting future cop in Detroit, USA. Within days of the internet campaign starting, \$25,000 had come in, and that figure was then doubled by Californian man Pete Hottelet, who said, "The more money we can raise the bigger the statue will be."

He was never in time for his classes... Then one day... he wasn't in his time at all.

STEVEN SPIELBERG Presents
BACK TO THE FUTURE

"BACK TO THE FUTURE" Starring MICHAEL J. FOX, CHRISTOPHER LLOYD, LEA THOMPSON, CRISPIN GLOVER
Music by ROBERT ZEMECKIS & BOB GALE
Produced by STEVEN SPIELBERG, KATHLEEN KENNEDY, ALAN SILVESTRI
Directed by ROBERT ZEMECKIS

He was never in time for his classes... Then one day... he wasn't in his time at all.

FANS' PASSION
A *Star Trek* mad engineer is building what he hopes will be a full-size, fully-functioning Starship Enterprise. The man, known as Dan, says it has been planned to the smallest degree and using nuclear generators could take us to the Moon in three days and to Mars in 90 days. See <http://www.buildtheenterprise.org>

THE A-Z OF SCI-FI MOVIES 37



Thomas Goodearl, Cambridgeshire

**WATCHED ALL SIX STAR WARS
BLU-RAYS IN A SINGLE SITTING**

What's the single most dedicated thing you've done for your film passion?

Probably my film studies degree. Over three years I learnt a lot. I now watch movies in a whole different light.



THOMAS IS NOT A HOARDER, DO YOU
HEAR US - NOT A HOARDER!

Can you put a cost on your passion?

Very expensive. Every time I get paid I usually buy a new DVD or Blu-ray. As I work in an entertainment shop, I'm basically compiling a shopping list as I'm working. Luckily at work we can trade-in stuff we don't want. I traded in over 80 DVDs I didn't want any more, just so I could get the complete James Bond boxed set.

Ever had a huge argument with someone who hasn't shared your interests?

I have gotten into many arguments with people

about my opinions of films - convincing people that *Lucky Number Slevin* is a great movie, Daniel Craig is the best Bond so far... The most common argument I get into is that I believe Heath Ledger was a better Joker than Jack Nicholson.

Have there been any problems associated with your interest?

I'm always in financial difficulties because I keep buying DVDs. I'm actually trying to stop now because someone described me as a hoarder and I thought, "Oh man, am I really a DVD hoarder?" Which is why I started trading in my DVDs for other stuff to prove that I'm not really hoarding.

What will you refuse to watch?

At work we sell the really low budget, Shameless horror movies - essentially softcore porn with a bit of gore. I refuse to watch those because for me, they're not films. They're a waste.

FANS' PASSION

Star Wars fans Duncan Thomson and Sammi Gardiner got married on 4 May 2009 on the Isle of Wight - and had their 50 guests all come in costume. Duncan dressed as Han Solo and his bride as Princess Leia. The couple's friend Dan Cawphery delivered readings as Darth Vader, guarded by two Stormtroopers.



Fatima Oldenvurg, Stockholm, Sweden

SAW FRIDAY THE 13TH ON FRIDAY THE 13TH IN ROW 13



DOLLS, MASKS, STARS,
LIGHTSABERS...

Why did you apply to be in this feature?

Simply because I love movies. Everybody tends to call me the biggest geek they know. They shrug their shoulders and shake their heads whenever I start talking about something.

Tell us a bit more about your main interest.

My main interest is horror movies. It's my dad's fault, he used to show me all kinds when I was young. My mum always got upset but I wasn't scared. I just like them, so I continued to watch them on my own. I like anything that's not reality. Most people like dramas - I like anything that's fantasy and not realistic.

What's the single most dedicated thing you've done for your film passion?

I went to London just to see a movie with some friends from other countries. We planned the trip around going to see this movie, because it came out in London before it came out in our countries. That was *Shame* with Michael Fassbender. It's not a

horror movie or anything, but we had a common interest in Fassbender...

Ever had a huge argument with someone who hasn't shared your interests?

So many times. I get very passionate when I like something. People go, "Maybe that wasn't so good," and I start explaining for hours why something was really good. It happens a lot.

How much would you say the internet has changed your life?

I sit on pages like Twitter and Tumblr constantly checking for updates. It's the best way to get information because we don't get things as early as the UK or the US. If I didn't have it, I'd probably be a more outdoor person. I'm pretty attached to my computer.

Ever had a pub quiz round you've aced?

Yeah, we had this little competition at work. It was basically movies, TV shows and some music. Our group won because it was me and two others who are interested in movies so we kicked their arses. It wasn't the most mainstream movies and TV shows; I think that's why we won.

Would you say there have been any problems associated with your interest?

Not really, other than causing arguments with people. It made me gain more friends with similar interests.

What's your all-time favourite film?

It's so unfair to just pick one. I really like the first *Saw* movie. I got obsessed with it. It reminded me of Freddy Krueger. When Freddy Krueger came out, I was too young and I didn't see it at the movies. For me, *Saw* was the new horror franchise, with a really well-known icon in the doll.

What will you refuse to watch?

Twilight. I will never, ever watch any of the *Twilight* movies. I can't. I've heard too much. I've seen the reactions and the fans. I've seen the trailers. I think I'd die a little inside if I actually saw any of the movies.

FANS' PASSION

Star Wars fan Terry Cooper was so distraught at the state Luke Skywalker's Tatooine home had got into he decided to renovate it. So last year the 42-year-old trekked to the Tunisian desert to repair the iconic igloo. The Cardiff man said, "It was going to waste for the sake of a relatively small amount of money and effort to save it."



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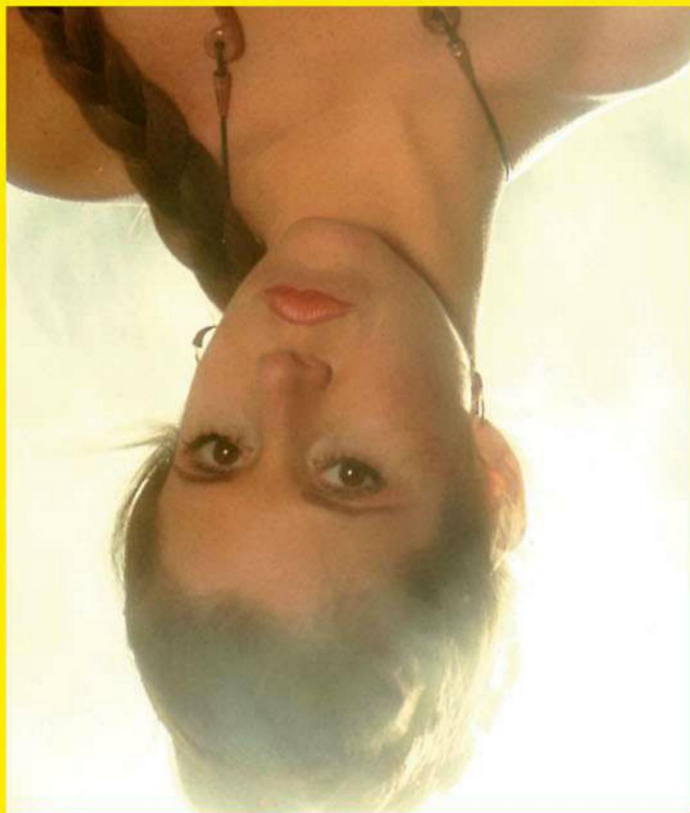
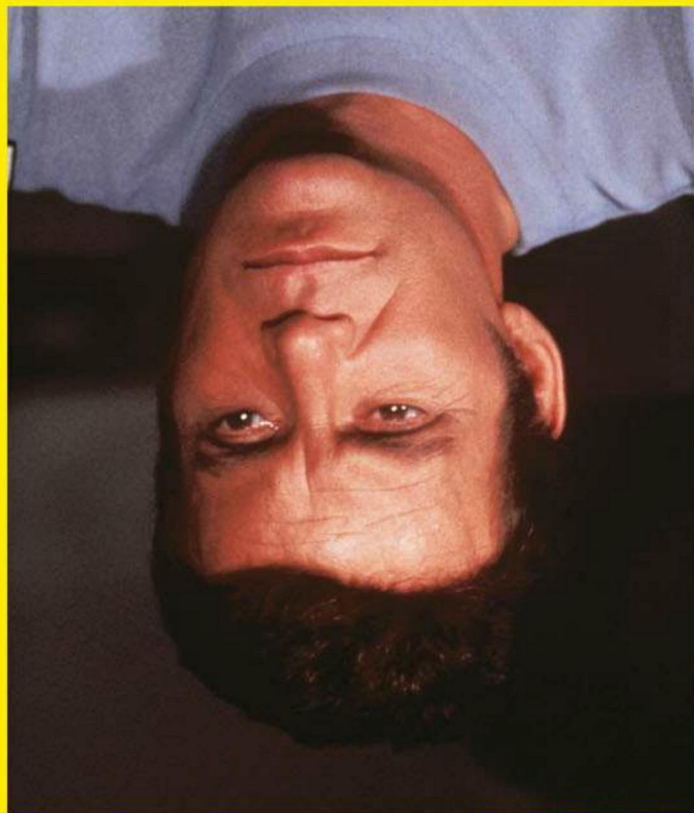
Games

Time to take a break with our SF-themed brainteasers and illusions

Words: Russell Lewin

Think you recognise these stars of science fiction?

Make your guesses then turn the page upside down to see if you're right. You might get a bit of a surprise...



Want a black James Bond?

Still haven't got your wish after 50 years? Well, now you can! Simply stare at the three dots in this illustration of the super-spy for 40-60 seconds, quickly close your eyes, open them again and look at the white box alongside it. Hey presto, Bond is now black!



Separate Tim Burton from Johnny Depp!

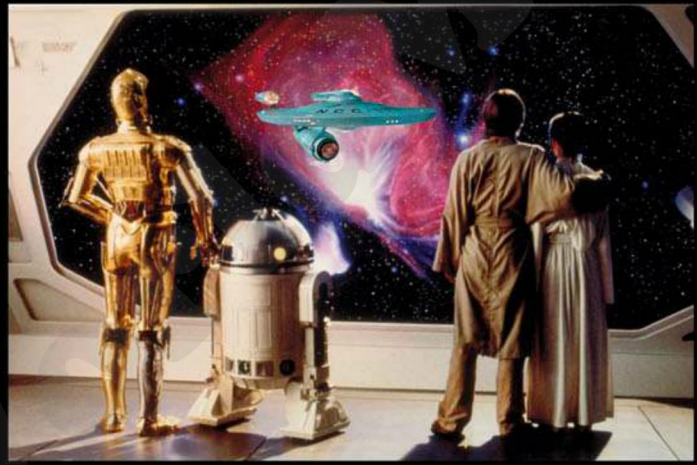
Yes, you can make the impossible happen! Simply close your left eye, hold the magazine at nearly arm's length and look at Depp's head with your right eye. Slowly bring the magazine towards you, but keep your eye fixed on Depp's head with your right eye. When the magazine is about a foot from your face, Burton will suddenly vanish. Hey presto, Burton and Depp have finally been split up!

WHY THIS HAPPENS: This illusion works because each of our eyes has a "blind spot", a small area inside each eyeball that cannot see the world.

THIS MAGAZINE BELONGS TO

(and now I'm going to get less for it on eBay)

Can you spot the difference between these two shots of *The Empire Strikes Back*? Tricky, eh?



Yes, it's that thing Roy Walker used to do

- but with an SF twist! From the clues given can you work out the name of the films? Answers at bottom



1



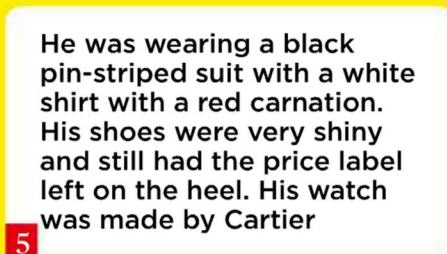
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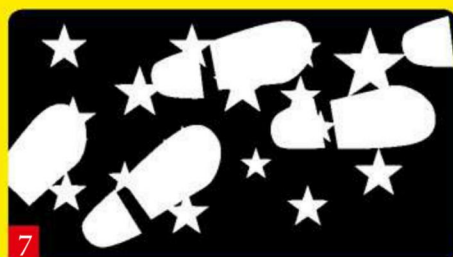
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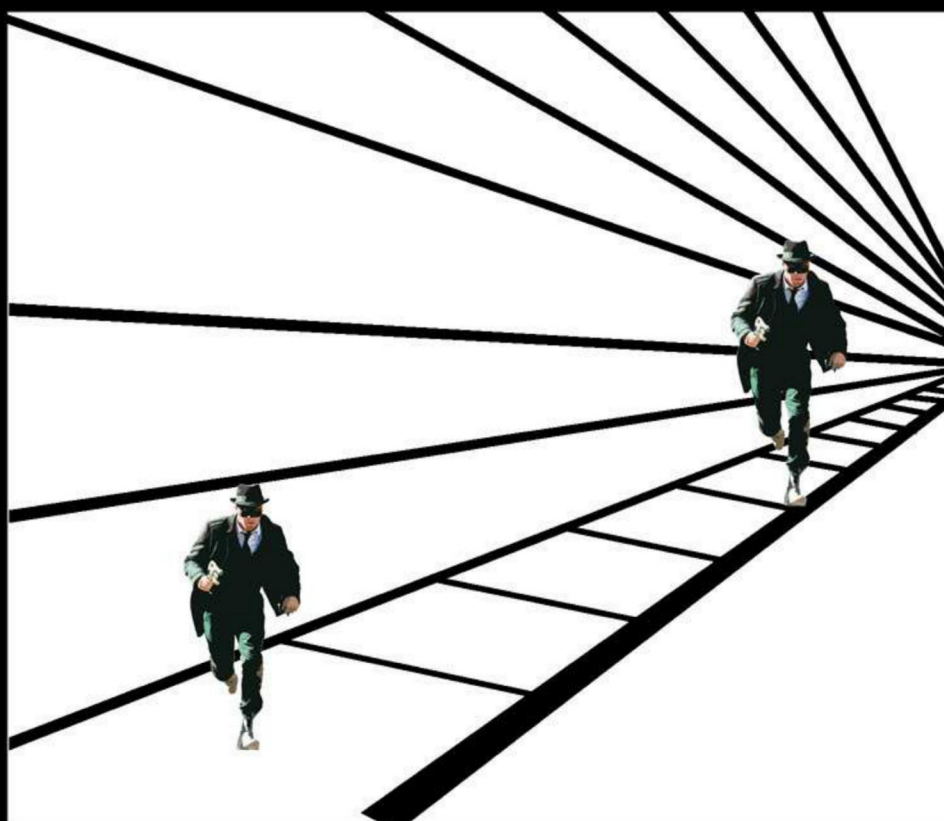
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9

Seth Rogen lost a lot of weight to star as the Green Hornet. But looking at these two photographs of him, can you guess which one is the larger?

Answer: Yep, they're both exactly the same size! He's just as slim and athletic in both of them.



1 Kick-Ass 2 The Dark Knight 3 Forbidden Planet 4 The Fifth Element 5 Total Recall 6 Groundhog Day 7 Star Trek 8 Rosemary's Baby (it's a picture of the Editor - his mum's name is Rosemary!) 9 An American Werewolf in London

Like Steven Spielberg films? So do we. So much so we've made some pictures featuring more than one of his films in each one. Flip the page over to see what we mean

Illustrations:
Paul Cemmick



Those viewing on a tablet might need to turn themselves around!

ET/Minority Report and Jurassic Park



Al and Jaws



Raiders Of The Lost Ark and War Of The Worlds

Close Encounters Of The Third Kind and Saving Private Ryan



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DREDD





HITCHCOCK

WE TALK TO DIRECTOR SACHA GERVASI ABOUT HIS NEW FILM **HITCHCOCK** AND LOOK AT THE MASTER'S FLIRTATIONS WITH OUR GENRE

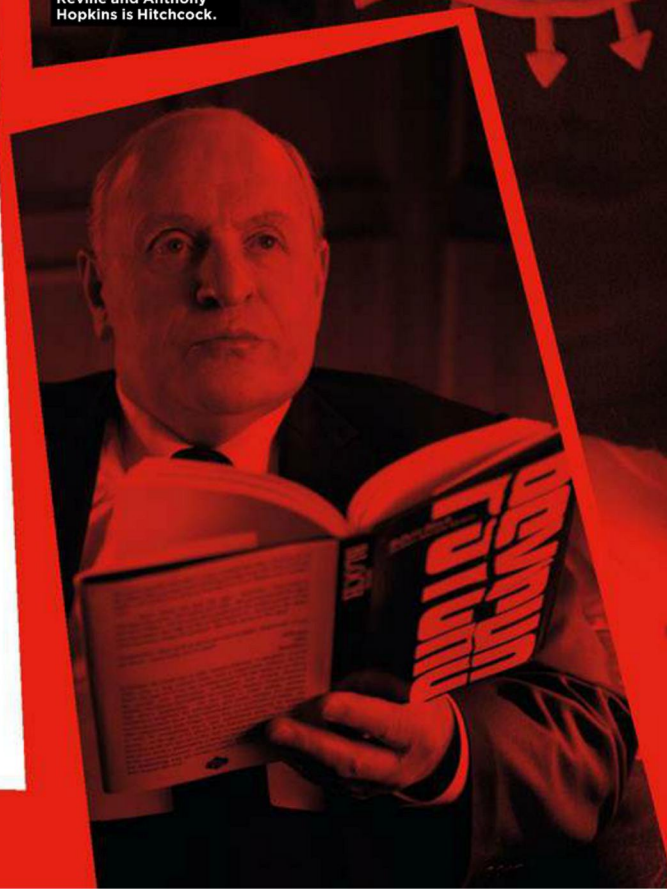
● Words: Joseph McCabe

Given that Sir Alfred Joseph Hitchcock ("Hitch" to his friends) is arguably the most famous English-language filmmaker of all time, it's no wonder that the first major motion picture about his life was a long time in coming. For what filmmaker and actor could hope to do justice to the face, voice and wit that greeted audiences every week on TV's *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*? To the artist who directed *Vertigo* (which, in 2012, displaced *Citizen Kane* as the greatest film of all time in *Sight & Sound*'s poll of critics worldwide)? And to the maverick who crafted *Psycho*, quite possibly the most influential horror movie ever? Enter Sacha Gervasi and Anthony Hopkins. As demonstrated in his directorial debut, *Anvil*, and his screenplay for Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal*, Gervasi has an understanding and affinity for tormented dreamers, while Hopkins has often unleashed the full force of his titanic talent in portraying real-life figures. Based on author Steven Rebello's *Alfred Hitchcock And The Making Of Psycho*, Gervasi and Hopkins' *Hitchcock* seeks to probe the mind of one of the most celebrated, and misunderstood, creative figures in history; while focusing on the marriage between Hitchcock and his wife Alma Reville (played by Helen Mirren). *SFX* sits down to chat with Gervasi about the man, the myth, and the Master of Suspense...

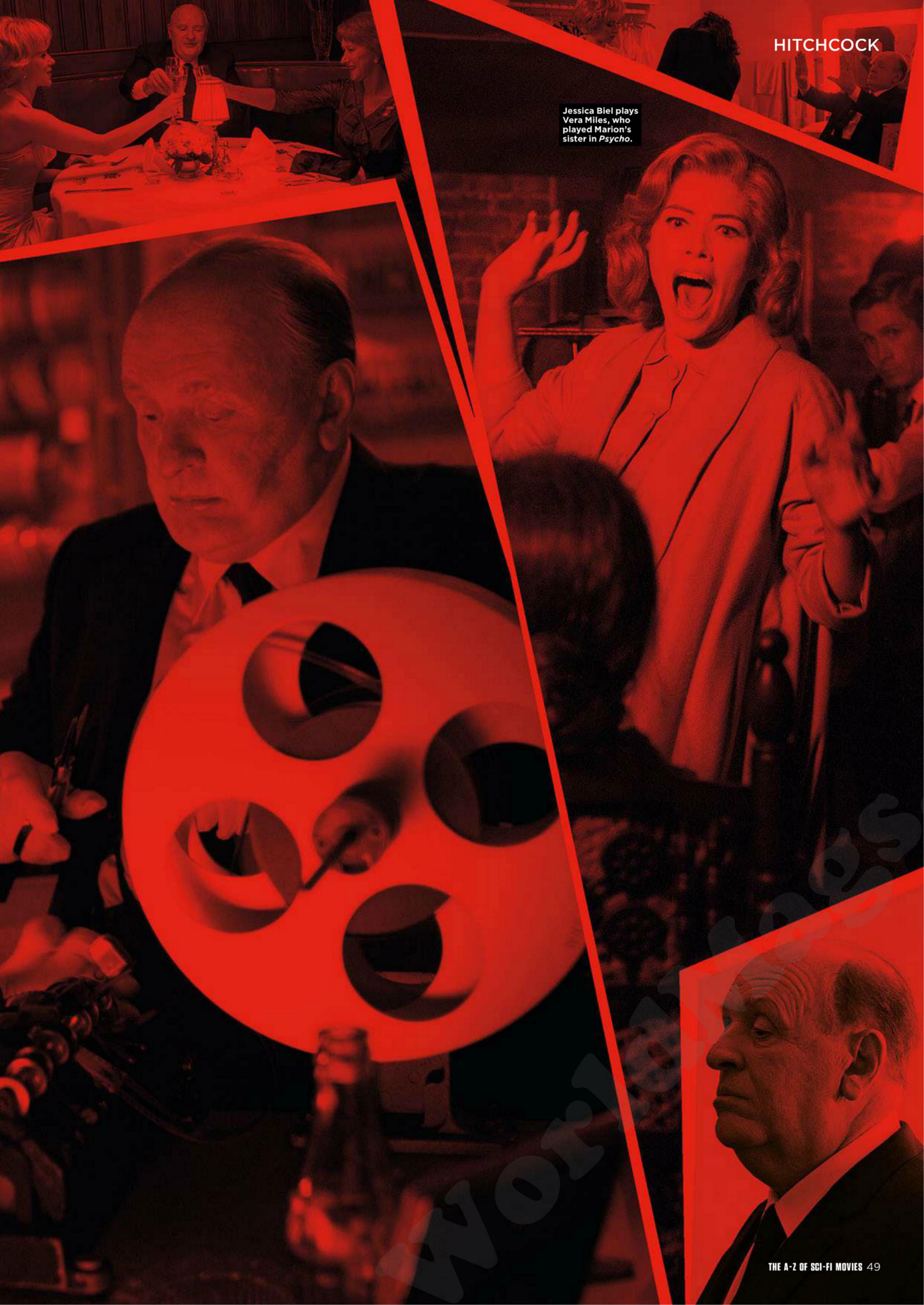
● Do you consider *Psycho* Hitch's best film?

Well I think it's one of his greatest films. There's no doubt it's considered, justifiably, a masterwork. Because in so many ways it's ▶

Helen Mirren plays Alma Reville and Anthony Hopkins is Hitchcock.



Jessica Biel plays Vera Miles, who played Marion's sister in *Psycho*.



Scarlet Johansson is Janet Leigh playing Marion Crane.

James D'Arcy makes a convincing Anthony Perkins.

HITCHCOCK AND US

Hitchcock may have only once ventured into fully-fledged SF/fantasy with *The Birds* (and is that fully fledged?), but many of his films have definite overlaps with genres that *SFX* covers. Indeed, it could be argued that the master *invented* many of the tropes that we see in modern-day fantasy and horror cinema. Here are his films that scream out for our attention.

● Words: Russell Lewin

HITCH & FANTASY

REBECCA (1940)

Is the ghost of Mrs de Winter haunting Manderley? No, but there are lots of spooky and suggestive scenes.

SPELLBOUND (1945)

Salvador Dalí designed this film's remarkable dream sequence which features floating eyes, another giant eye made of paper which is then cut with scissors and a mysterious masked figure with a twisted wheel. Nightmarish stuff.

VERTIGO (1958)

James Stewart falls in love with a ghost? Well, he doesn't, but for a while that is the suggestion of Hitchcock's influential, revered suspenser.

THE BIRDS (1963)

Why do our feathered friends suddenly turn against us? No idea, but it's the end of the world as we know it.

MARNIE (1964)

Whenever Tippi Hedren gets turned on the screen flashes red! It's like a William Castle gimmick shocker, with added intellectual weight. ▶

revolutionary. An above-the-title star is killed in the first 30 minutes, in one of the most visceral, graphic scenes of violence ever shot. Even though the violence is suggested it's incredibly powerful. If you trace the lineage of that particular scene, you see how influential it is. Because I'm not sure that the violence you see in *Bonnie And Clyde* and *The Wild Bunch* would happen without that scene. And later Tarantino and the *Saw* and *Hostel* movies. So kids going to the multiplex today to see one of those movies probably have no idea.

I think *Vertigo* is his best film. The one I enjoy the most is *Rear Window*, but I love *Vertigo*. That's the special one for me. *Psycho* is probably his most influential. It's brilliant. The great thing about Hitchcock is he does different kinds of films. He can do *To Catch A Thief*, he can do *Rear Window*, he can do *Psycho*, he can do *Dial M For Murder*, he can do *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. He has a vast range. He can do a film set entirely in a lifeboat, he can do a film in one shot – *Rope* [but see right! – Ed]. That's what was great: he's a virtuoso who can play every instrument. He's constantly experimenting and trying to be original and coming up with different things. And you have to say he's pretty incomparable in terms of the range of his ability.

● Were other actors considered for the title role in *Hitchcock*?

No. I just can't imagine any other actor doing it. It's as simple as that. When I went in to meet with the producers, I said, "If you don't get Hopkins I wouldn't bother making the film." And I meant it [laughs].

● Did Hopkins have to put weight on? How important was a physical resemblance?

I think the key thing was that the first make-up we did, it looked exactly like Alfred Hitchcock, but it completely covered up Anthony Hopkins, and we didn't want to do that. You want to be able to see what the actor can do. So we really stripped it down and found what I think is a really successful balance between Hopkins and Hitchcock, so that you know – we're letting the audience know that it's Anthony Hopkins playing Alfred Hitchcock, because it's important

for those who follow cinematic history, certainly the last 30 or 40 years, Hopkins plays these iconic characters. Whether it's Nixon, whether it's CS Lewis in *Shadowlands*. Whether it's Picasso or Hitler. He's known for playing these iconic people, but for playing them in his own uniquely own Hopkins-esque fashion, if that makes sense. We weren't trying to do an impersonation of Alfred Hitchcock. That was not our intention. Nor were we trying to make a documentary. We were trying to make a movie in the spirit of Hitchcock for an audience where we're having a sense of fun with it. I think even where we ended up – if you look, for example, in profile – it's remarkable.

“I didn't see the *Psycho* remake, it seemed weird to me”

● Is the moment in Hitchcock's life that you depict key to understanding his obsessions with his leading ladies?

I think what's interesting about it is he's 60 years old, and these young directors are coming up in France. *Les Diaboliques* has caused quite a sensation. People are talking about it as being the cutting edge film, the new generation of suspense filmmaking. And Hitchcock is making these gigantic commercially successful epics. "Pieces of cake" he called them. He's feeling old. He's feeling like he's the old guard, and he's trying to reinvent himself and come up with a way to shock his audience, but also to remind himself that it's not over. So for me there's a very powerful emotional core to his desire to make *Psycho*. He wants to do something commercial at one level. He also wants to do something radical. What's beautiful about it is he commits to that. To the degree that when people say, "You can't do it. We want you to do *Anne Frank* or *Casino Royale*," or whatever, he says, "Damn you." And he puts his own money into it, and takes such a massive risk. The interesting thing to me is about the character story of Hitchcock himself. Not so much his obsessions with his leading ladies. Because I think that as he took this risk and his obsessions rose, he put everything on the line, I



HITCH & HORROR

THE LODGER (1927)
Jack the Ripper stalks London town in Hitch's first truly classic suspense.

ROPE (1948)
This horrific tale of a murder done for kicks ISN'T done in one long take – nor does it pretend that every ten-minute break isn't there.

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN (1951)
More borderline horror as two men "swap" murders: certain imagery – like the strangulation reflected in glasses – is definitely not just *borderline* horror.

REAR WINDOW (1954)
This voyeuristic masterpiece has a number of scenes that are more spine-chilling and nerve-wracking than any horror film ever made.

PSYCHO (1960)
This isn't just any horror, it's one of the *kings* of the horror film, hugely influential on the slashers that came after and a thousand times better than any of them.

FRENZY (1972)
Hitchcock's most graphic and violent horror thriller, unlikely to be relieved of its 18 certificate any time soon. Also a masterwork. ▶



think the stakes, everything including his marriage, ascend.

● **Are you aware of the BBC drama about Hitchcock and Tippi Hedren, *The Girl*?**

Yeah. I haven't seen it yet, but of course I'm aware of it, and people I know have seen it and told me about it. I like Toby Jones as an actor. I'm sure I'll see it at some point.

● **Is Hitchcock the greatest film director of all time?**

I think that's too tricky a question. I mean I think there are several. Hitchcock is in that group. I would say that Kubrick is in that group for me. David Lean is also in that group for me. You can't deny the genius. But I think when people want to accord someone the title of "The Greatest", it's impossible to say. It's so subjective. But for me personally he's one of the greatest,

most influential filmmakers of all time, for sure. So too is Kubrick, in terms of really doing something individual and original with cinema.

● **How do you rate the remake of *Psycho*, and *Psycho's* sequels?**

I haven't seen the remake, which hypothetically just seemed a bit weird to me [laughs]. I didn't see the *Psycho* sequels either. They just weren't something that I was drawn to. I just tend to stick with the original. The original and best as they say. I wasn't really interested in retreading it. Because it seemed to me such a unique one-off thing that I wasn't really in the mood for a sequel to *Psycho*, you know? Though I know they were made, and Anthony Perkins directed one of them. But I honestly didn't pursue that. I think because there was a worry in the back of my mind that somehow it might ruin the original. Even though I'm sure they're good films.

● **What are your thoughts on the film Hitchcock made after *Psycho*, *The Birds*?**

I think it was again a brilliant horror picture. It was really, really well done. I don't think for me it was as brilliant as *Psycho*, but it's an extremely good film. Which obviously did very well, though not as well as *Psycho*. And perhaps one of the last really good films he made.

● **Was it scandalous that Hitchcock never won an Oscar for Best Director? Why do you think this was?**

He was nominated several times. One person said famously, "The only thing you need to know about the Oscars is Alfred Hitchcock never won one" [laughs]. But it's a complicated thing. He was nominated for Best Picture I think a few times. I don't think it's scandalous. It doesn't surprise me because these things are so random. At the time, films don't necessarily find their right place in history. When *Psycho* came out it was dismissed as a flimsy piece of trash. The *New York Times* called it "a blot on an otherwise honourable career". And now it's a masterwork. What I'm saying is it's sometimes impossible at the time to recognise the genius, and they acknowledged it clearly with nominations, but it is of course surprising that he never won. But I don't think it's a scandal.

● **You're next making a film about Hervé Villechaize, star of *Fantasy Island* and *The Man With The Golden Gun*. What attracted you to that project?**

I don't know if it's going to be next. We're hoping that it is. But yeah, that's based on the true story of my interview with him a few days before he committed suicide in 1993. I was the last journalist to interview Herve. What attracted me to it was the fact that it's a true story and I had a certain perception of him, that he was this freakish weird little guy who was going to be a funny dinner party story. I had no understanding, and I couldn't really get how complicated and incredibly smart and pained he was as a human being. Because we're going through the world so quickly, putting someone in a pigeonhole here, a pigeonhole there. We rush to judge. It's very hard to take the time to see what people are really like. I took the time when I interviewed him, and I just was so moved by the human story of this man who was trapped and having such a tough time. It sort of changed



my perception of things, in terms of how quick I was to judge him. Yet I really didn't have the faintest idea of the story behind the headlines, so to speak.

● **One can't help but see a parallel between *Anvil* and Hitchcock and your Villechaize project. They're all stories of pained individuals wrestling with creative demons.**
Yeah. Even in the movie I wrote for Spielberg, *The Terminal* with Tom Hanks. It's an oddball, eccentric outsider who is a bit jokey in one sense, or slightly surreal, and then when you strip away the layers you discover their humanity. I think that's sort of been an unconscious theme I suppose. But I can't really talk about it too much. Because then it would be a conscious theme and then I might stop doing it! ☹️

Hitchcock is out now, courtesy of Twentieth Century Fox.

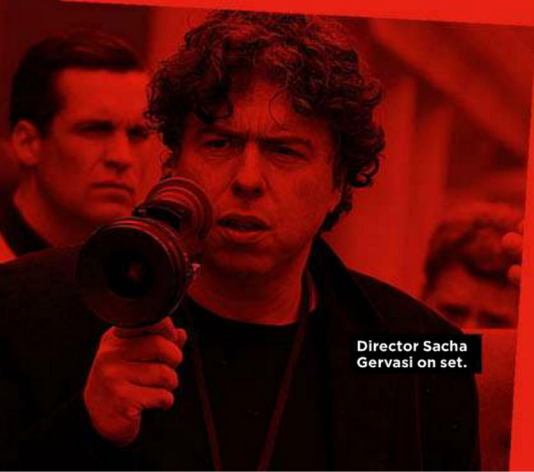
HITCH & BOND-TYPE THRILLER

FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT (1940)
Hitch had previously made *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The 39 Steps* and *Secret Agent* but this was his first American man-in-trouble thriller, that fact lending it a more expansive and dynamic air.

SABOTEUR (1942)
Another wild goose chase involving spies, traitors, heroes and MacGuffins. There's one setpiece atop the Statue of Liberty that wouldn't be out of place in, say, *A View To A Kill* or *Moonraker*.

TO CATCH A THIEF (1955)
The glamorous side of life, with a bit of thieving involved. Cary Grant was considered as a possible James Bond, and this and *North By Northwest* illustrate how he might have been.

NORTH BY NORTHWEST (1959)
The master's most accomplished innocent-man-on-the-run movie is a superbly shot, magnificently scored, peerlessly performed extravaganza that no doubt influenced *Dr No*, made three years later.



Director Sacha Gervasi on set.

IS FOR

I've Never Seen...

Forbidden Planet (but I'm going to right now!)

Images © Kobal Collection



BEFORE

I don't admit my *Forbidden Planet* virginity easily. I'm well aware of its muscular reputation and I know it's a favourite film of various friends and colleagues. Working on a sci-fi magazine and admitting you've never seen *Forbidden Planet* is like working for Q without ever having bought *Abbey Road*, or clocking in on *Heat* without having brushed up on your weekend *X Factor*. It might even be a sackable offence, I dunno.

All I know about it is that it features Leslie Nielsen, looks a bit like an episode of *Lost In Space*, has a character named Robbie the Robot and is based on *The Tempest*. And why I've avoided it so far is precisely because of those four things. I like Leslie Nielsen when he's in

Zucker brothers mode and only then, I never liked *Lost In Space*, I can't stand gimmicky robots and I barely remember *The Tempest* from A-levels, so I'm a bit frightened of feeling stupid. Also, *The Day The Earth Stood Still* aside, the 1950s wasn't a good time for cinematic science fiction, so I'm expecting it to be fairly corny, kind of stilted and rather like those SF stories George McFly reads in *Back To The Future*.

So, I'm wondering if *Forbidden Planet* is only really talked about because it was one of the first stellar-budget, Technicolor, cinemascopic SF movies, or whether because it's dazzlingly brilliant outside of those considerations. Right, feet together, arms up, I'm going in...

"I'm expecting it to be fairly corny, kind of stilted and rather like those SF stories George McFly reads"

It's not just Steve

He isn't the only *SFX* bod not to have seen all the classics. Here more of them 'fess up...

Calum Waddell

Not seen... *Ghost In The Shell*

Will Salmon

Not seen... *Rosemary's Baby*

Steve Jarratt

Not seen... *On The Beach*

David West

Not seen... *Inception*

Russell Lewin

Not seen... Any *Men In Black* film

Miles Hamer

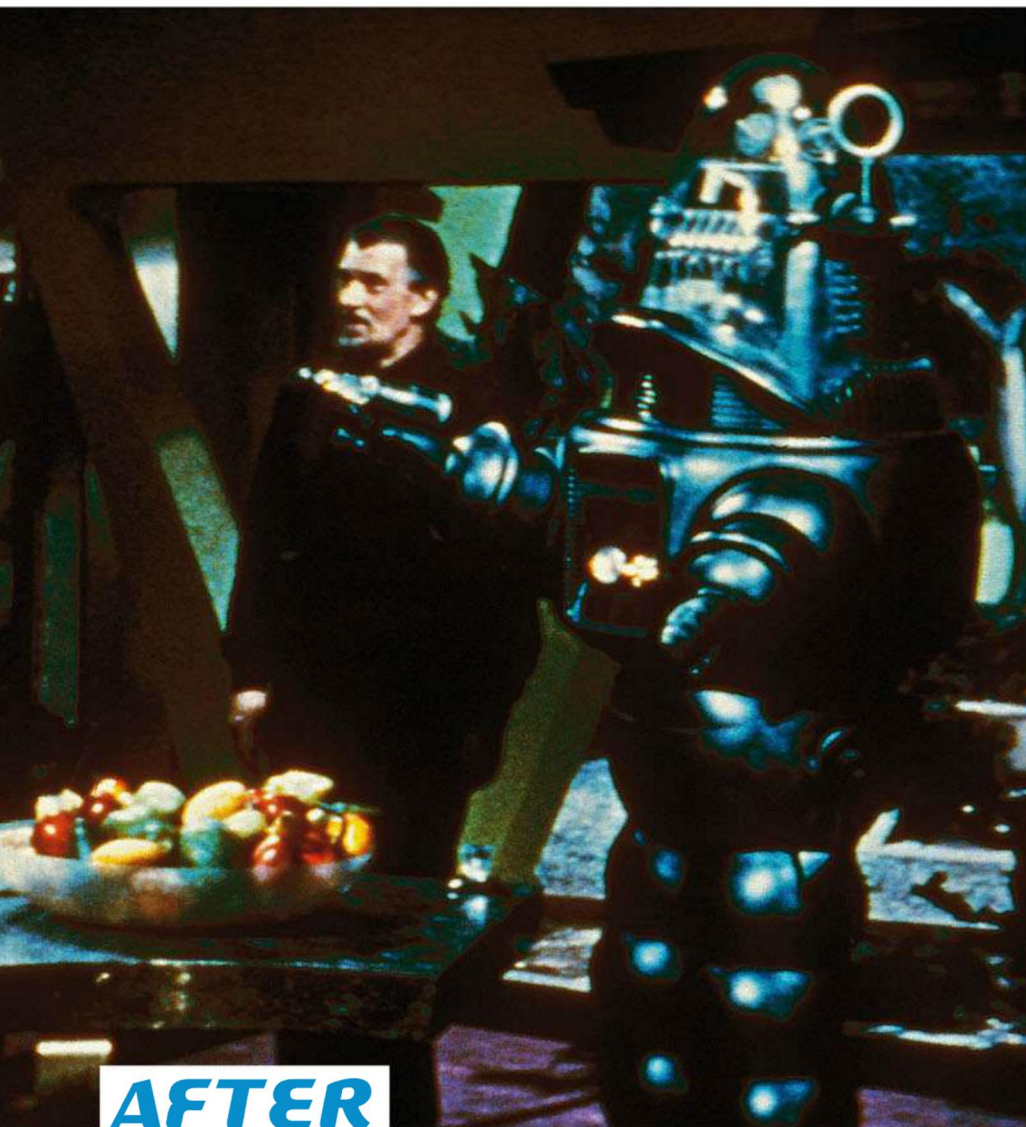
Not seen... *2001: A Space Odyssey*

David Cromarty

"I feel I should see *2001: A Space Odyssey*, though I don't particularly want to. I do want to see *Inception*."

Steve O'Brien has written for *SFX* since 1997. But he has a confession to make – and something to put right...

Words: Steve O'Brien



Spoilers? So what!

Not having seen films that others *have* seen can be a dicey business. Not just because you can feel left out, but avoiding those pesky plot details. People do tend to be more careful in giving away information nowadays though. But are they *too* careful? Do some people go too far in complaining about leaked spoilers? Back in *SFX* 217 Russell Lewin blasted militant spoilerphobes. Here we reprint his column because, according to him, “nothing has changed – if anything things have got worse!” Is he going too far, or does he have a point?

Today I'd like to rail against spoilerphobes, specifically those who get *extremely* annoyed and abusive at hearing details from films and TV shows. Perspective has been lost. I accept that if I give away the *ending* of something I deserve censure, but if I talk about the start of something that I *haven't* seen do I deserve opprobrium (as happened recently)? Some are even getting bothered about hearing *titles* of TV episodes!

Crying “spoiler” has become boring and hackneyed. Perhaps it's linked with anal retentiveness, or it's the spoilt brat who always wants things exactly their own way; what they forget is that the film or show is not *theirs*, and the company releasing it has to attract *other people* to see it. Sometimes it can seem that the most extreme spoilerphobes want to shut down views that they don't agree with.

Why has crying “spoilers” become so common in recent years? My opinion is this: it's because of a combination of choice-led popular capitalism, in which the consumer is evermore empowered, and the growth in human rights legislation, which likes to guarantee a (supposed) fair say for all, with cultural relativity reigning supreme. Those who may have little else in life to say that guarantees them attention can shout “spoilers!” to hog the limelight while at the same time occupying the moral high ground.

Of course there are going to be “spoilers” everywhere during the promotion of a film/TV show – how else would the makers attract an audience? You *have* to show some of the action. 99.9% of trailers ever made contain “spoilers”. What spoilerphobes forget is that you don't remember most of what you see in a trailer, which is why you'll often see what eventually prove to be key scenes in them.

You can still richly enjoy a production if you know some details of the plot. *Psycho* is still a brilliant watch despite lots of viewers coming to it knowing about the shower scene.

Yes, it's a good thing that the culture has changed so we don't have the likes of *Halliwel's Film Guide* giving away major plot revelations as a matter of course, but things have gone too far. Calm down, spoilerphobes, the world is not coming to an end because a few frames of your favourite show are on the net before you've watched the episode on the telly.

Okay, that wasn't half bad. But I'm still mystified by the easy labelling of *Forbidden Planet* as a classic of the genre. Maybe next to most of its '50s SF stablemates it's a cut above, but it's no *Planet Of The Apes* or *2001* or *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*. Let's get some perspective here...

I'm sorry about the *Lost In Space* comparison. It may well be airlessly studio-bound, but it looks amazing. The production design is sumptuous and some of the FX can still nudge a “wow”.

But it's not *Lost In Space* that *Forbidden Planet* reminded me of, it's *Star Trek*. Quite how Gene Roddenberry survived his original run on *Trek* without an aggressive lawsuit from MGM is beyond me. A spaceship crew touching down on a planet to check on a human colony, to be greeted by just two survivors is a classic *Trek*

set-up. But what *Forbidden Planet* lacks and what *Trek* had in abundance are characters that feel like real people. While the ideas are good in the movie (though apparently we've got William Shakespeare to thank for some of them), the characterisation is anaemic. And that's not helped by the listless direction of Fred M Wilcox, who seems uninterested in the dramatic possibilities of close-ups, framing the whole story in painterly, but energy-sapping, mid-shots.

So, I feel better for having watched *Forbidden Planet* now. My SF credentials have been firmed up and I'm better armed the next time Shakespeare comes up in conversation. And I've also found out, after decades thinking it was spelt Robbie the Robot, that it's *Robby*. So that's definitely 98 minutes that weren't wasted...

“It's not *Lost In Space* that *Forbidden Planet* reminded me of, it's *Star Trek*”



JIM CARREY

Paying tribute to one of the world's biggest genre stars (and you better believe it!)

Words: Russell Lewin Quotes sourced by: Tara Bennett

He's one of the world's most bankable film stars, but his contribution to sci-fi and fantasy is often overlooked. Jim Carrey has appeared in 14 films that can definitely take shelter under *SFX*'s umbrella. So let's not waste another second before checking them out and, in some cases, hearing the great man himself talk about them. And look out for two new JC films coming your way this year!

1: ONCE BITTEN (1985)

★★★★★

A female vampire in search of virgins picks on a teenager whose girlfriend won't sleep with him.

Flat-ish horror comedy with some nice moments but a writer and director who are

JIM FACT:
JIM WROTE SEVERAL LETTERS TO TUPAC SHAKUR WHEN THE RAPPER WAS IN PRISON.

unable to elevate it above the ordinary. Carrey, in his lead debut, is the best thing here but he's still some years away from seeing his act mature into something very special.

JC PLAYS: Mark Kendall

DIRECTOR:

Howard Storm

ADDITIONAL CAST:

Lauren Hutton, Karen Kopins, Cleavon Little

2: PEGGY SUE GOT MARRIED (1986)

★★★★★

A 43-year-old mother goes to a class reunion and is transported back to high school again.

A sort of *Back To The Future* for an older audience but rather in the shadow of that movie, which preceded it by a year; there are smiles but there are also dry patches and confusing scripting. Carrey has a small role as the Nicolas Cage character's friend Walter.

JC PLAYS: Walter Getz



JIM SAYS:

"[WEARING THE MASK] WAS HORRENDOUS. THAT KIND OF MAKE-UP IS HARD. YOU HAVE TO TRANSCEND WHATEVER BULLSHIT IS AROUND YOU AT THE TIME AND ACTUALLY MAKE A PERFORMANCE HAPPEN. THAT IS ACTUALLY THE WORK OF ACTING."

INSIDE THE ACTOR'S STUDIO, 2011

DIRECTOR: Francis Ford Coppola

ADDITIONAL CAST:

Kathleen Turner, Nicolas Cage, Barry Miller, Maureen O'Sullivan, Sofia Coppola

3: EARTH GIRLS ARE EASY (1988) ★★★★★

Three hairy, horny aliens come to California looking for Earth women.

Zany, quirky musical comedy which manages to hold the attention. Carrey has a smallish role as one of the aliens.

JC PLAYS: Wiploc

DIRECTOR: Julien Temple

ADDITIONAL CAST: Geena Davis, Jeff Goldblum, Damon Wayans, Michael McKean

4: THE MASK (1994)

★★★★★

A bank clerk is transformed into a manic superhero by donning a strange mask.

Irresistible hokum with inspired special effects, a sharp script and a star rapidly on his way to permanent top billing.

JC PLAYS: Stanley Ipkiss/The Mask

DIRECTOR: Chuck Russell

ADDITIONAL CAST:

Cameron Diaz, Peter Riegert

**JIM SAYS:**

"THIS GUY [THE RIDDLER] IS DEFINITELY KIND OF SCARY. HE'S A STALKER. HE'S THE GUY WHO FOLLOWS THE CELEBRITY AROUND AND ISN'T HAPPY UNTIL HE ENTERS HIS LIFE IN SOME WAY. IT'S KIND OF A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT."

RAY MARTIN, 1995

JIM THINKS:

"TRUMAN'S A GUY WHO, FOR SOME REASON, DEEP DOWN, HAS THIS MELANCHOLY. HE'S A WONDERFUL HUMAN BEING. HE WANTS EVERYBODY TO BE HAPPY, AND NO ONE TO BE BURDENED BY HIS SADNESS. TRUMAN IS THE GUY WHO PUTS ON THE FACE THAT HE LEAVES IN THE JAR BY THE DOOR. BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT ANYBODY TO FEEL BAD, OR TO THINK THAT HE'S BROKEN. WHEN TRUMAN GOES OUT THE DOOR IN THE MORNING, SAYING HELLO TO THE NEIGHBOURS ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH FOR A PERSON LIKE THAT. THAT'S WHY I CAME UP WITH THE LINE WHERE HE SAYS, 'AND IN CASE I DON'T SEE YA, GOOD AFTERNOON, GOOD EVENING, AND GOOD NIGHT!' THAT'S MY FAMILY - THE CARREY FAMILY."

NEW YORK MAGAZINE, 1998

5: BATMAN FOREVER (1995) ★★★★★

The Caped Crusader, with Robin, takes on Two-Face and the Riddler.

Lighter in tone than its two predecessors (*Batman* and *Batman Returns*), this is much more up for fun as opposed to being deep 'n' dark.

JC PLAYS: Edward Nygma/The Riddler

DIRECTOR: Joel Schumacher

ADDITIONAL CAST: Val Kilmer, Tommy Lee Jones, Nicole Kidman, Chris O'Donnell, Michael Gough, Drew Barrymore

6: LIAR LIAR (1997) ★★★★★

A wish makes a slippery lawyer tell the truth for 24 hours.

With an idea like this and effervescent Carrey in the lead role, this feel-good comedy can hardly fail to delight and delight it does, despite the odd

JIM FACT:

JIM TURNED DOWN \$10M TO MAKE *THE MASK II*. EVENTUALLY, SON OF *THE MASK* WAS MADE WITHOUT HIM.

sentimental lapse or two.

JC PLAYS: Fletcher Reede

DIRECTOR: Tom Shadyac

ADDITIONAL CAST: Maura Tierney, Jennifer Tilly, Amanda Donohoe

7: THE TRUMAN SHOW (1998) ★★★★★

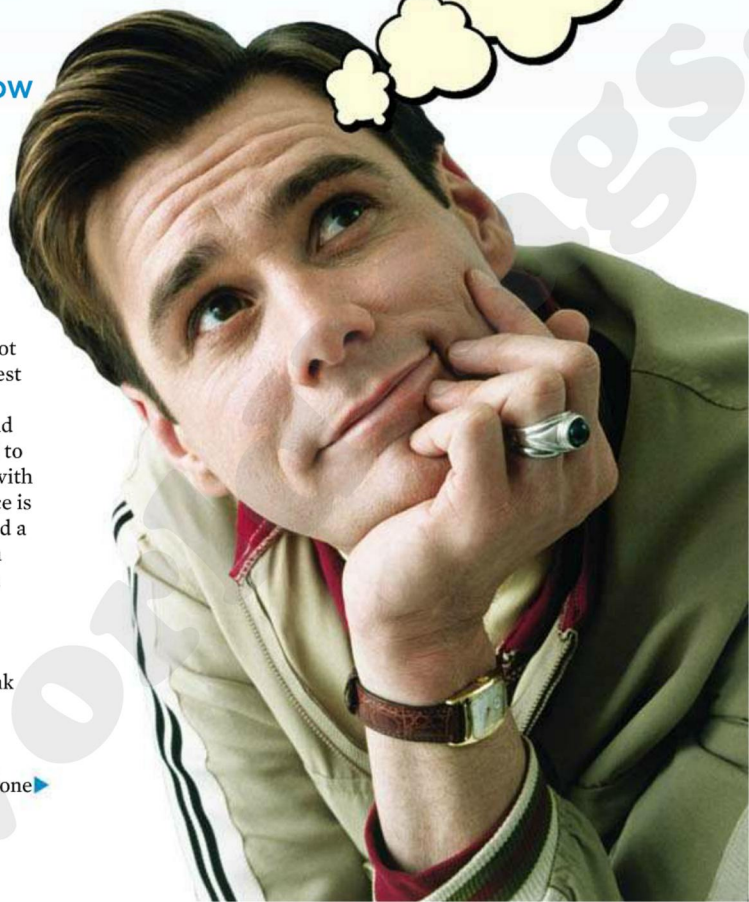
An apparently ordinary man begins to realise he is actually the star of a television reality show that has a huge global audience.

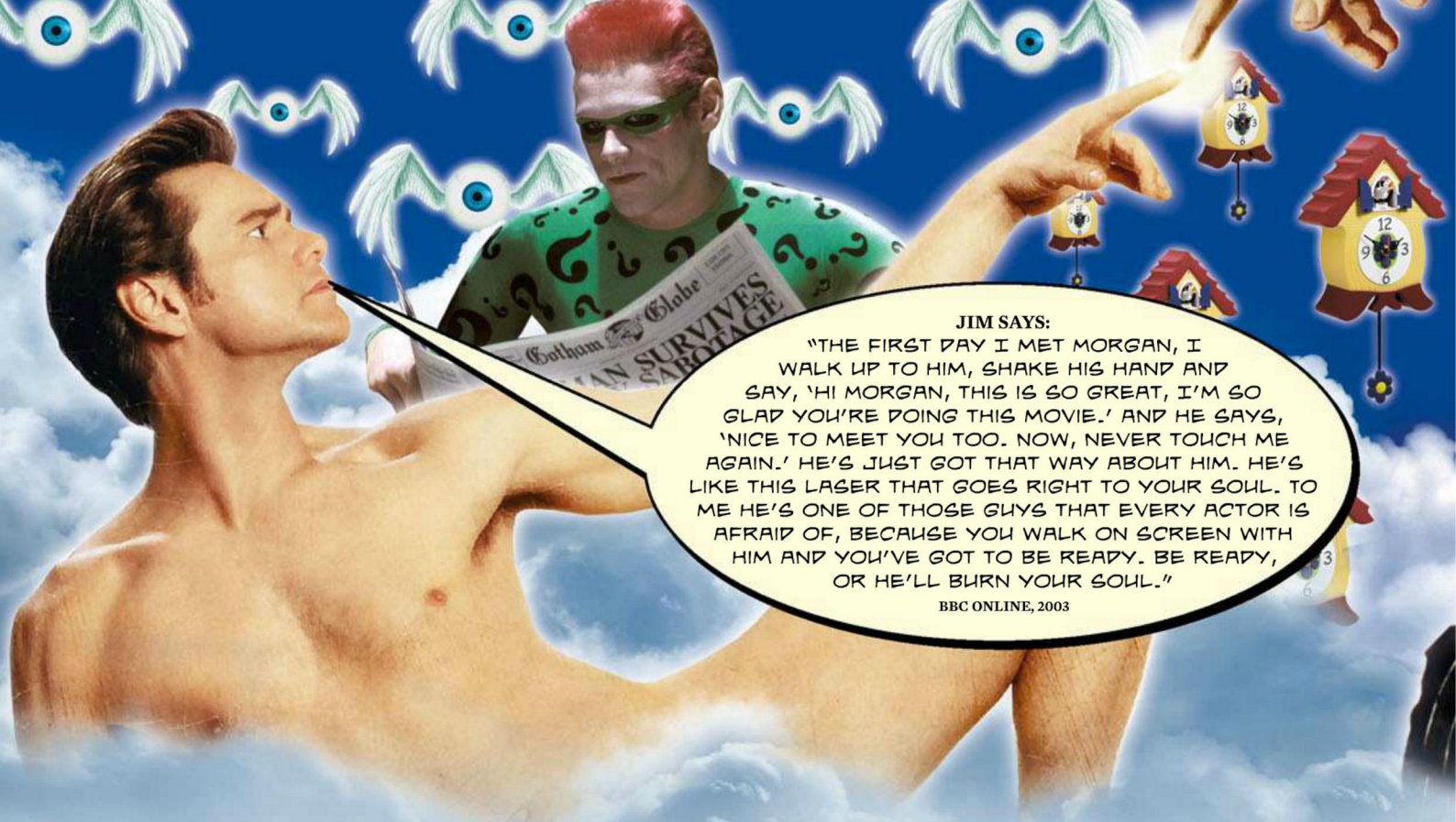
Examined closely the scenario may not totally stand up, but that matters not as this is Hollywood's greatest movie in many a year, a beautifully scripted, shot and scored fable that has appeal to both the masses and those with brains. Carrey's performance is amiable and understated and a perfect accompaniment to a genial and entertaining film which was prescient in its portrayal of the vampiric nature of reality television.

JC PLAYS: Truman Burbank

DIRECTOR: Peter Weir

ADDITIONAL CAST: Ed Harris, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich, Natascha McElhone ▶





8: THE GRINCH (2000) ★★★

A curious creature named the Grinch is intent on stealing Christmas.

Non-cynical kids may enjoy this fantasy, and adults may like its inventiveness but be disappointed by its lack of plot and Carrey going through the motions as a crazy character. Lavish looking but there's nothing to connect to.

JC PLAYS: The Grinch
DIRECTOR: Ron Howard
ADDITIONAL CAST: Taylor Momsen, Jeffrey Tambor

9: BRUCE ALMIGHTY (2003) ★★★★★

A troubled, ordinary man is given God's powers by the man himself.

Enjoyable comedy along predictable lines which gives its star plenty of room for clowning.

JC PLAYS: Bruce Nolan
DIRECTOR: Tom Shadyac
ADDITIONAL CAST: Morgan Freeman, Jennifer Aniston, Steve Carell

10: ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND (2004) ★★★★★

After his ex-girlfriend has her

JIM FACT:
JIM ONCE LIVED IN A VW VAN WITH HIS FAMILY WHEN THEY WERE STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY.

JIM SAYS:
"THE FIRST DAY I MET MORGAN, I WALK UP TO HIM, SHAKE HIS HAND AND SAY, 'HI MORGAN, THIS IS SO GREAT, I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE DOING THIS MOVIE.' AND HE SAYS, 'NICE TO MEET YOU TOO. NOW, NEVER TOUCH ME AGAIN.' HE'S JUST GOT THAT WAY ABOUT HIM. HE'S LIKE THIS LASER THAT GOES RIGHT TO YOUR SOUL. TO ME HE'S ONE OF THOSE GUYS THAT EVERY ACTOR IS AFRAID OF, BECAUSE YOU WALK ON SCREEN WITH HIM AND YOU'VE GOT TO BE READY. BE READY, OR HE'LL BURN YOUR SOUL."

BBC ONLINE, 2003

JIM SAYS:
"IT JUST HAD NEVER BEEN DONE IN THIS MEDIUM AND I THOUGHT IT WAS A COOL IDEA. IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE THINGS YOU CAN'T SAY NO TO. I MEAN, IF I DESTROYED IT FOR YOU IN SOME WAY I APOLOGISE, I JUST CAN'T HELP MYSELF. I'LL SAY NO TO THE REMAKE OF IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE, IF THAT HELPS. HONESTLY THOUGH, THERE HAS BEEN THE BOOK AND TELEVISION SHOW AND IT WAS LIKE, WHERE DO WE GO? BUT NOW, IT'S LIKE, OHMIGOD. THERE IS JUST NO COMPARISON. IT'S ITS OWN ANIMAL. IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT. THE SPECIAL EFFECTS PEOPLE DID SUCH A WONDERFUL JOB."

HEATHER WADOWSKI, 2000

memory of him erased, a forlorn man undergoes the same treatment.

Brilliantly original and intriguing fantasy with a style all of its own; it's a pleasure to watch such an unconventional Hollywood product.

JC PLAYS: Joel Barish
DIRECTOR: Michel Gondry
ADDITIONAL CAST: Kate Winslet, Elijah Wood, Kirsten Dunst

JIM THINKS:
"WELL, YOU KNOW, IT'S LIKE MOSES COMING DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN WITH THE TABLETS. EVERY TIME [CHARLIE KAUFMAN] HAS A SCRIPT, ALL OF HOLLYWOOD GOES, 'IT'S HEEEEEERE!' HE'S JUST SO ROCK N' ROLL AT THE SAME TIME THAT HE'S A COMPLETE INTELLECTUAL. THIS MOVIE HAS EVERYTHING GOING, SO WHEN I READ THE SCRIPT, FIRST OF ALL, I WAS JUST HAPPY TO BE A SMALL PART OF HIS LEGACY, BECAUSE I KNOW THIS IS GOING TO BE ONE HELL OF A LEGACY AT THE END OF ALL OF HIS CREATIVE MADNESS. BUT THIS SCRIPT IS EVERYTHING. MOST OF THE TIME HE STAYS IN THIS WILD, INTELLECTUAL WORLD. AND THIS ONE JUST HAS SUCH AN ANCHOR OF HEART. IT'S SOMETHING WE CAN ALL IDENTIFY WITH ON AN EMOTIONAL LEVEL, SO IT'S GOT EVERYTHING GOING AT THE SAME TIME. I FEEL LIKE I WON THE LOTTERY."

IGN Q&A, 2004

JIM SAYS:

"IT'S AN INCREDIBLE FILM. AND IF YOU'RE LUCKY, AT SOME POINT IN YOUR LIFE YOU HAVE THAT KIND OF CHRISTMAS CAROL MOMENT, YOU KNOW? I CERTAINLY HAVE, WHERE THINGS WERE KIND OF GOING SOUTH, AND I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HOW HORRIBLE THINGS COULD HAVE GOTTEN WITHOUT THEM ACTUALLY GOING THERE. I CAN'T GET INTO SPECIFICS BUT I HAD MY GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE, YOU KNOW, AT A CERTAIN POINT IN MY LIFE, THAT I WENT, LIKE, 'OH, WOW. OKAY. I GOTTA REALLY START CARING ABOUT THE RIGHT THINGS HERE.' AND IT'S JUST A FANTASTIC STORY."

ABOUT.COM, 2009

JIM SAYS:

"THERE WAS A MOMENT WHERE COUNT OLAF SLAPS ONE OF THE KIDS AND THERE WAS CONTROVERSY AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TO HAVE THAT IN THE MOVIE AND I SAID, 'YOU KNOW WHAT DUDE? BAMBI DIES.' IN MOST GREAT MOVIES THAT CONNECT WITH PEOPLE THERE'S SOME KIND OF TRAGEDY INVOLVED AND SOME KIND OF PAIN INVOLVED. IT'S A STRANGE KIND OF BALANCE THAT WE'RE STRIKING HERE, I'M NOT SURE IF IT'S BEEN DONE THIS WAY BEFORE. ALTHOUGH I WANT TO BE ENTERTAINING, THE BOTTOM LINE IS OLAF IS NOT A NICE PERSON. HE HAS TO BE THAT WAY. I SAID TO THEM EARLY ON THAT I WANT THEM TO LAUGH, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE DANGER HAS TO BE REAL OR WE HAVE NOTHING. THE MOVIE IS MEANINGLESS WITHOUT REAL DANGER."

BLUNT REVIEW Q&A, 2004

JIM FACT:
JACK NICHOLSON NAMED JIM THE "JACK NICHOLSON" OF THE NEXT GENERATION.

Dickens's novella is a visually sumptuous 3D mo-cap version which may be one of the most stunning looking films ever. But it's not a masterpiece, maybe because the animation detaches viewers from the characters, some scenes are perhaps more suited to a theme park ride, and there aren't the laugh-out-loud moments that you'd expect, especially seeing as Carrey is in the lead. It's also difficult to see who the main target audience is, with a lot of it being way too scary for the little ones. Still, it looks dazzling, and that might be enough for some.

JC PLAYS: Ebenezer Scrooge/Ghosts of Christmas Past/Present/Yet to come

DIRECTOR: Robert Zemeckis

ADDITIONAL CAST: Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Bob Hoskins, Robin Wright Penn

Jim's latest genre film, *Kick-Ass 2*, will be released by Universal on 19 July. Before that, *The Incredible Burt Wonderstone* opens on 15 March courtesy of Warner Bros. Check out his unique website: www.jimcarrey.com.

11: LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS (2004)

★★★★★

Three children who are heirs to a fortune are persecuted by their evil, greedy relative.

Original, charming junior fantasy with stunning art direction and ripe performances, it should sit happily in the Christmas TV schedules for years to come.

JC PLAYS: Count Olaf

DIRECTOR: Brad Silberling

ADDITIONAL CAST: Liam Aiken, Emily Browning, Timothy Spall, Billy Connolly

12: THE NUMBER 23 (2007)

★★★★★

A man becomes obsessed with the number 23 while reading a book about its terrifying effects.

Preposterous thriller which dissolves the germ of a great idea in a murky and muddled scenario that neither lends itself to convincing conspiracy theory nor compelling mystery. It might have worked better as a comedy and would have definitely worked better if it was less heavily stylised.

JC PLAYS: Walter Sparrow

DIRECTOR: Joel Schumacher

ADDITIONAL CAST: Virginia Madsen, Logan Lerman, Rhona Mitra

JIM FACT:
FOR DUMB AND DUMBER, JIM HAD A CAP REMOVED ON HIS FRONT TOOTH TO SHOW HIS REAL CHIPPED TOOTH.

13: HORTON HEARS A WHO! (2008) ★★★★★

A kindly elephant helps out some people that inhabit a tiny speck in his world.

One of the better Dr Seuss adaptations, this witty and proficient cartoon serves up succinct entertainment for both children and adults, partly due to a story that comfortably works on two levels.

JC PLAYS: Horton

DIRECTORS: Jimmy Hayward & Steve Martino

ADDITIONAL CAST: Steve Carell, Carol Burnett, Will Arnett, Seth Rogen

14: A CHRISTMAS CAROL (2009)

★★★★★

A miser is visited by four ghosts on Christmas Eve.

Disney's third crack at

JIM SAYS:

"THE THING THAT I LOVED ABOUT HORTON WAS THAT HE IS A WORLD APART FROM THE GRINCH, WHO I PLAYED IN *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS*. THIS IS A CHARACTER WHO DOES NOT HAVE ANY EGO AT ALL. FIRST OF ALL, I THOUGHT TO MYSELF, HOW AM I GOING TO PLAY AN ELEPHANT? NOBODY HAS DONE A VOICE FOR HORTON BEFORE. I THOUGHT SURELY THERE HAS TO BE A BIG BOOMING VOICE BUT WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE SOUL OF HORTON, YOU REALISE THAT HE DOESN'T THINK HE'S BIGGER THAN ANYTHING ELSE. HE DOESN'T THINK HE'S BIGGER THAN THE MOUSE, WHO'S HIS BEST FRIEND. HIS SOUL IS MUCH MORE GENTLE THAN YOU'D IMAGINE. HE IS NOT AN ELEPHANT IN HIS OWN MIND. HE THINKS OF HIMSELF AS SMALL AND LIGHT."

INDIELONDON Q&A, 2008



Films aren't just for grown-ups, you know. A four-year-old film fan tells us his likes, dislikes and just how scary the Hulk gets when he's angry...

Words: Rhian Drinkwater



K is for Kids, and it's safe to say there are plenty of films out there that will ensure any child grows up a full-fledged SF geek. Whether it's *Toy Story* or *Star Wars*, there's so much to love. Here, we talk to young Harry Drinkwater about his favourite genre films.



Superheroes

Alas, a lot of modern superhero films have gone the dark-and-haunted route, making them a little unsuitable for younger children, and Harry's kept away from anything with too much "real world" violence. There's still plenty out there for the determined parent though. Harry's a fan of the animated *Ultimate Avengers* film, Kenneth Branagh's *Thor*, and Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* films, among many others.

SFX: What's your favourite film?

HARRY: *Avengers*.

SFX: Who's your favourite character?

HARRY: Hulk.

SFX: Why?

HARRY: Hulk smash!

SFX: Which superhero would you like to be?

HARRY: Iron Man. Cos I like him. He fires from his hands - pshew, pshew, pshew! And when he flies. I only like Iron Man and Spider-Man. Not Captain America. Cos he's so stupid.

SFX: What does he do that's stupid?

HARRY: Fights Hulk. He hits Hulk.

SFX: Can anyone beat Hulk?

HARRY: Yes. Iron Man!

SFX: Who's the scariest bad guy?

HARRY: Hulk.

SFX: Is he scary when he's bad?

HARRY: Yes, he smashes! And he picked Thor's



hammer but it was too heavy, only Thor can have it. It's not nice to fight though. Like, move your legs and hit somebody – that's not nice.

HARRY HAS A FURTHER COMMENT ON HULK:

"If we eat sweetcorn we'll turn into yellow Hulk. If we eat green peas we turn into green Hulk. If we eat pink beans we turn into pink Hulk."

SFX: What about Thor, what happens in his film?

HARRY: At the end on the bridge, when Thor and Loki were fighting, Thor's father came and said, "No Loki, let go," and then he did let go.

SFX: And do you get scared by any of them?

HARRY: If I'm scared Mummy will switch it off but I'm not scared, I'm brave like Steve Rogers.

LIKE MOST YOUNG BOYS, HARRY'S A HUGE SPIDER-MAN FAN.

HARRY: Can we watch *Spider-Man*? The one where he kisses MJ! And with the Green Goblin! And he makes his costume. He puts paint blue on, and paint red on, and the spider, and his mask, and white on his eyes.

SFX: Who do you find scary in *Spider-Man*?

HARRY: Green Goblin.

SFX: Why?

HARRY: He eats Spider-Man's costume.



"Thor's father said, 'No Loki, let go.'"



"He puts paint blue on and paint red on."



"He eats Spider-Man's costume."

Science fiction and fantasy

Moving on to less comic-based films, Harry is unsurprisingly a big *Star Wars* fan – though a little too fond of Jar Jar Binks for his parents' liking. We suppose it shows that Lucas was right about him being for the kids, though it doesn't mean we approve.

SFX: Who's your favourite character in *Star Wars*?

HARRY: Darth Vader.

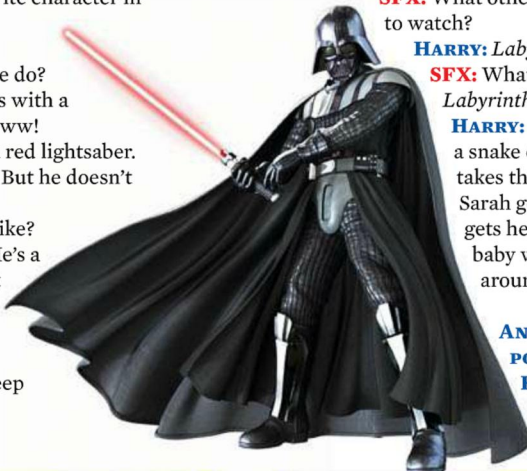
SFX: Why, what does he do?

HARRY: Fight! He fights with a light saber. Pshewwwwwww! Pshewwwwwww! He has a red lightsaber. He fights Jar Jar Binks. But he doesn't kill him.

SFX: Who else do you like?

HARRY: Free-pee-ho. He's a robot. He can go: "Must go to the policeman." His best friend's Artoo Detoo. He can't talk properly, he only can beep beep beep.

SFX: Anyone else?



HARRY: Jar Jar Binks.

SFX: Why do you like him?

HARRY: Cos he can turn round and he can jump in the sea, and he can swim underwater.

WATCHING RETURN OF THE JEDI, HARRY DOES A RENDITION OF THE SONG AT JABBA'S PALACE, WHICH IS QUITE SOMETHING, BUT ALAS IMPOSSIBLE TO TRANSCRIBE.

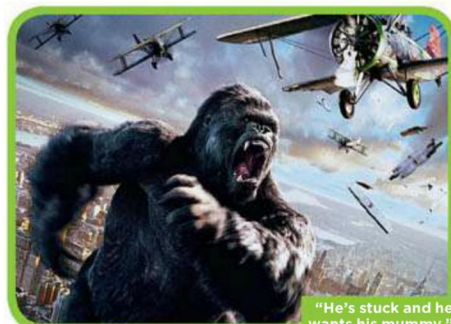
SFX: What other films do you like to watch?

HARRY: *Labyrinth*.

SFX: What happens in *Labyrinth*?

HARRY: The goblin throws a snake on Sarah's neck. He takes the baby to the castle. Sarah goes to the castle and gets her baby back. But her baby went really fast around the castle!

AND, AFTER SEEING A POSTER OF KING KONG, PERCHED ON THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING:



"He's stuck and he wants his mummy."



"He can turn around and he can jump in the sea."

HARRY: He's sad because he's stuck and he wants his mummy.

Disney and children's SF

It's not all straight SF and fantasy though – back in the realm of traditional children's films, Disney have been making great genre pieces for years. From *Beauty And The Beast* to everyone's favourite Space Ranger in *Toy Story*, Disney films make great training for raising young SF geeks.

SFX: Who's your favourite person in *Toy Story*?

HARRY: Only Buzz. He's a space ranger. He flies!

SFX: What happens to Buzz in the films?

HARRY: He falls down. He presses his belt then he flies! He's got two ways to fly – press his belt then he flies, press his wings then he flies!

SFX: In all the films?

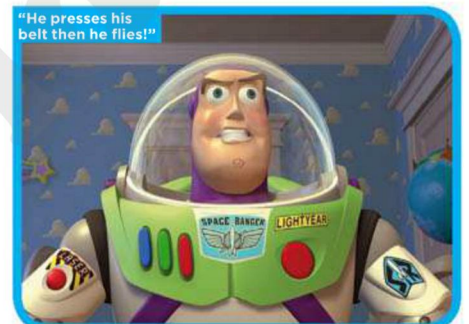
HARRY: He doesn't fly in *Toy Story 3*. No flying. Any flying! [pause] I really like Buzz.

SFX: What does Woody say when Buzz turns up?

HARRY: "You are a toooooooy!"

SFX: Does it ever scare you?

HARRY: I had a dream and baddie Buzz torred [shot] Mummy and Daddy, and ate the house. ▶



"He presses his belt then he flies!"

Rex is a dinosaur, but not a scary dinosaur, only a good one.

SFX: Is there anyone scary?

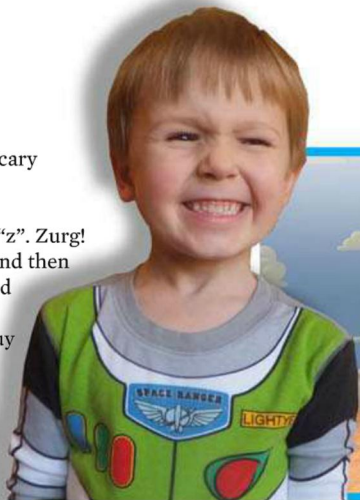
HARRY: Yes... Begins with a "z". Zurg! He's a baddie. He comes in and then with his gun he tors Buzz and then Buzz falls into two pieces. Buzz is the coolest guy in the whole wide world!

SFX: What else do you like?

HARRY: Wall-E.

SFX: What happens in that?

HARRY: Wall-E's on the spaceship. If he lets go, he'll just fall fall fall fall down to Earth.



"He tors Buzz and Buzz falls into two pieces."



"Wall-E's on the spaceship."

TV on the big screen

We're obviously big fans of our favourite TV series getting the silver screen treatment, and Harry's no exception. *Scooby-Doo And The Lake Monster*, *Thomas And The Magic Railroad...* and the '60s classic *Dr Who And The Daleks*, starring Peter Cushing.

SFX: What do you like about the film?

HARRY: I like the Daleks. Exterminate!

SFX: Are Daleks scary?

HARRY: No!

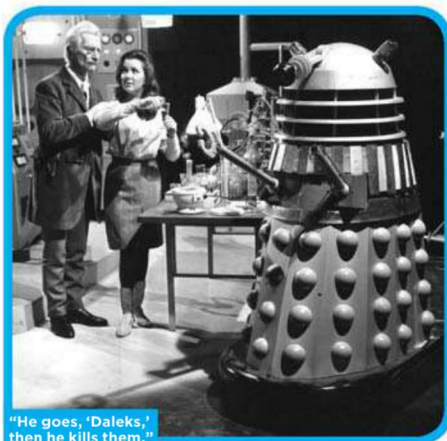
SFX: Who else is in it?

HARRY: It's got the old Doctor! He finds Daleks. Then he goes, "Daleks," then he kills them then he goes back to where the Daleks live. There are Dalek eyes in the walls. The Daleks have different colour things that they talk in. My favourite is the black Dalek. The little girl goes on her own to the scary trees.

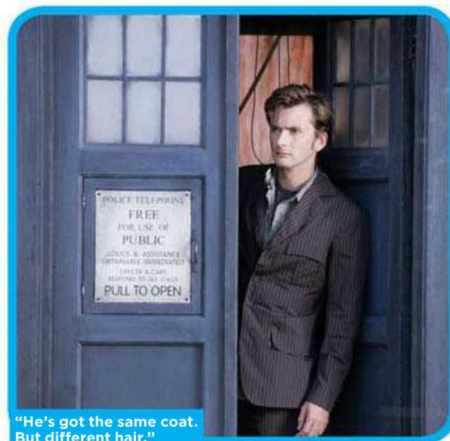
SFX: Who's your favourite person in the film?

HARRY: The Doctor. He's got the same coat as my Doctor [David Tennant]. But different hair.

"In Wall-E, Wall-E's on the spaceship. If he lets go, he'll just fall fall fall fall down to Earth"



"He goes, 'Daleks', then he kills them."



"He's got the same coat. But different hair."

Rand 12A m ratings

Words: Rhian Drinkwater

Just what are the BBFC playing at?

The BBFC's ratings can sometimes mystify any film fan, but for parents they get even more confusing. Even aside from the 12/12A distinction – so Harry could see *Avengers Assemble* in a darkened cinema, but it becomes unsuitable on his sofa with the lights on? – the line between a PG and a 12 can seem somewhat blurred. *Jurassic Park*, for example, is a PG, and according to BBFC guidelines this shouldn't be too upsetting for any child eight or over. Yet it's still terrifying to many children older than that. Sam Raimi's first *Spider-Man* film is a 12, but

there's nothing in there as scary as a realistic dinosaur chasing a young child and threatening to rip him apart. *Spider-Man 2*, however (rating: PG) shows Doc Ock attacking and killing a group of surgeons in a scene that's straight out of a horror movie. But then we may be bringing adult sensibilities to our judgement; Harry barely notices the chainsaws, but if one character hits another he's immediately outraged by how naughty they are!

Harry loves *Doctor Who* and the Weeping Angels, *Spider-Man 2* and *Batman* cartoons, but he finds the end of *Snow White* (rating: U) scary. On Christmas Day he insisted that Disney's *Tangled* be turned off because it was too frightening! And, though it's a favourite and he watches it often, the death of Simba's father in *The Lion King* is probably the thing he watches that upsets him most. *Monsters, Inc* tells children there are creatures hiding under their bed and many adults are still scarred by the death of Bambi's mum. Dalek cities on an alien planet, in comparison, are completely divorced from a child's everyday life. It's something that will

change as a child grows, of course – while in general older children will be better able to cope with more mature films, their greater understanding of adult themes may mean they find some films more disturbing as they get older.

So what do we expect from ratings? It's obvious that anything explicitly violent is unsuitable for young children, as well as anything dangerous that they might copy. But drawing the line on what they find scary or upsetting is something that can only really be done by a child's parents.



Harry got scared by *Tangled*...



...but loves the Weeping Angels.

00:11:25:22

JENNA-LOUISE COLEMAN



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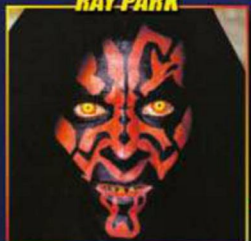
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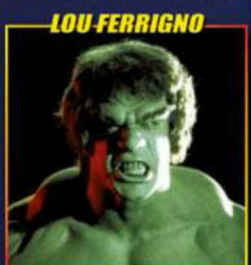
CHARLES DANCE



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LOU FERRIGNO

THE INCREDIBLE HULK



AMY 'LITA' DUMAS
WWE, DARK ANGEL



JULIAN SANDS
STARGATE, SMALLVILLE



SPICE WILLIAMS
Star Trek



RICHARD POE
Star Trek



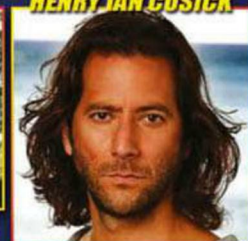
SUNITA HENRY
Star Trek



DUNCAN REGEHR
Star Trek



BONNIE LANGFORD
DOCTOR WHO



LOST, FRINGE
TORRI HIGGINSON



JEAN MARSH
Willow, Dr Who



KEN KIRZINGER
Jason



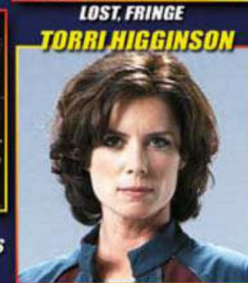
GETTIN ANTHONY
Game of Thrones



DAN STARKEY
Doctor Who



DENIS LAWSON
STAR WARS, NEW TRICKS



STARGATE ATLANTIS



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Jurassic Park



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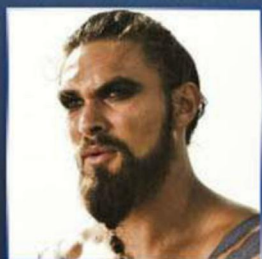
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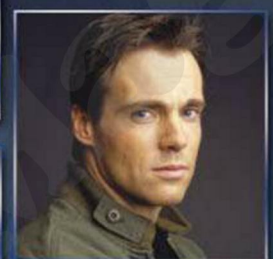
DEE WALLACE
X-FILES



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NOT JUST A GREAT WEEKEND... AN ESSENTIAL ONE!

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Words: Russell Lewin

In true *Sight & Sound* fashion, we ask *SFX* types for their all-time favourite top 10 films

Whereas the seriously academic film publication asks lots of high-brow critics for their top 10s – who then go on to list silent black and white foreign films that you've never heard of – we're sticking with the *SFX* team, or the *SFX* family, if you like, to tell us their favourites. We trust them more, for starters.

Narin Bahar, Freelance writer for *SFX*

In no particular order

- Star Wars (1977)
- Serenity (2005)
- X2 (2003)
- The Princess Bride (1987)
- Avengers Assemble (2012)
- Moon (2009)
- Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)
- District 9 (2009)
- Back To The Future (1985)
- Star Trek (2009)

Thirty-six staff and freelancers were asked for their 10 favourite *SFX*-type films, either in order or not, whichever they preferred. Thankfully all of them replied (they're nice like that). So you have what you see here. Enjoy seeing what pops up multiple times, and what pops up just once! And try not to get annoyed.

Tara Bennett, *SFX* US Editor (East Coast)

- 1 Aliens (1986)
- 2 The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- 3 Star Wars (1977)
- 4 The Matrix (1999)
- 5 Ghostbusters (1984)
- 6 The Princess Bride (1987)
- 7 Galaxy Quest (1999)
- 8 The Dark Crystal (1982)
- 9 The Fountain (2006)
- (tie) 10 Blade Runner (1982) & The Terminator (1984)

Lee Coan, Freelance writer for *SFX*

In no particular order

- Star Wars (1977)
- The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- Return Of The Jedi (1983)
- A Clockwork Orange (1971)
- Donnie Darko (2001)
- Aliens (1986)
- Terminator 2: Judgment Day (1991)
- Scott Pilgrim Vs The World (2010)
- The Dark Knight (2008)
- Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind (2004)

Sarah Brown, *SFX* work experience

- 1 The Matrix (1999)
- 2 The Truman Show (1998)
- 3 Avengers Assemble (2012)
- 4 Inception (2010)
- 5 The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001)
- 6 The Hunger Games (2012)
- 7 Avatar (2009)
- 8 Serenity (2005)
- 9 Jurassic Park (1993)
- 10 X-Men (2000)

Bonnie Burton, *SFX* columnist

- 1 Blade Runner (1982)
- 2 The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- 3 Aliens (1986)
- 4 Destroy All Monsters (1968)
- 5 Donnie Darko (2001)
- 6 Shaun Of The Dead (2004)
- 7 Serenity (2005)
- 8 Ginger Snaps (2000)
- 9 Jurassic Park (1993)
- 10 Starship Troopers (1997)

Paul Cemmick, Illustrator

In no particular order

- Blade Runner (1983)
- 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
- Bride Of Frankenstein (1935)
- The City Of Lost Children (1995)
- Alien (1979)
- Dr Strangelove; Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb (1965)
- Forbidden Planet (1956)
- Fantasia (1940)
- Starship Troopers (1997)
- Duck Dodgers In The 24 1/2 Century (1953)

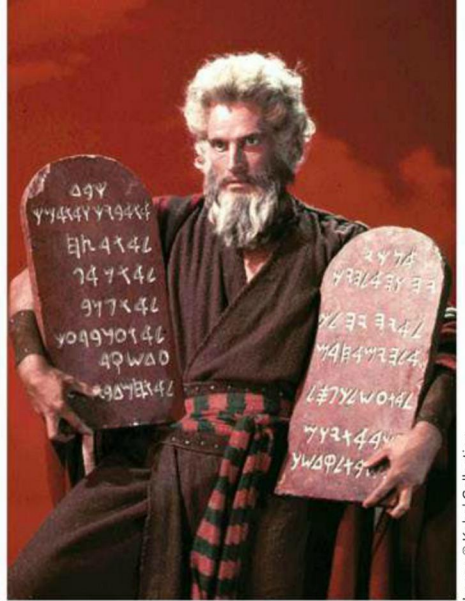


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Dave Bradley, *SFX* Editor-in-chief

- 1 Star Wars (1977)
- 2 Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan (1982)
- 3 The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001)
- 4 Highlander (1986)
- 5 The Matrix (1999)
- 6 Batman (1989)
- 7 Serenity (2005)
- 8 Excalibur (1981)
- 9 300 (2006)
- 10 Hawk The Slayer (1980)



David Cromarty, Freelance writer for *SFX*

- 1 The Dark Knight Rises (2012)
- 2 Serenity (2005)
- 3 The Cabin In The Woods (2011)
- 4 Armageddon (1998)
- 5 Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind (2004)
- 6 Spider-Man 2 (2004)
- 7 Looper (2012)
- 8 Starship Troopers (1997)
- 9 District 9 (2009)
- 10 The Adjustment Bureau (2011)

Honourable mentions to *Moon*, *Ghostbusters* and *Source Code*.



Nina Cromeyer Dieke, Freelance writer for *SFX*

In no particular order, but "Star Wars is above all!"

Star Wars (1977)
The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
Return Of The Jedi (1983)
Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom (1984)
Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade (1989)
The Shining (1980)
Blade Runner (1982)
Jurassic Park (1993)
Alien (1979)



Sarah Dobbs, Freelance writer for *SFX*

1 An American Werewolf In London (1981)
2 The Cabin In The Woods (2012)
3 Cat People (1942)
4 Skeletons (2010)
5 Suspiria (1977)
6 The City Of The Dead (1960)
7 The Fifth Element (1997)
8 Cloverfield (2008)
9 Jennifer's Body (2009)
10 Sky Captain And The World Of Tomorrow (2004)



Rhian Drinkwater, Freelance writer for *SFX*

In no particular order

The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001)
The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)
Gremlins (1984)
Serenity (2005)
Labyrinth (1986)
Avengers Assemble (2012)
Dogma (1999)
Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (2004)
The Crow (1994)
Jurassic Park (1993)

Richard Edwards, *SFX* News Editor

In no particular order (and only one movie per franchise)...

The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
Back To The Future (1985)
Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan (1982)
Aliens (1986)
Tremors (1990)
The Thing (1982)
Ghostbusters (1984)
Blade Runner (1982)
Wall-E (2008)

Jordan Farley, *SFX* staff writer

1 Aliens (1986)
2 Blade Runner (1982)
3 The Thing (1982)
4 The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
5 Wall-E (2008)
6 The Dark Knight (2008)
7 Scott Pilgrim Versus The World (2010)
8 Kick-Ass (2010)
9 Inception (2010)
10 Dawn Of The Dead (1978)

Give it a year and *Looper* will probably be on that list too. Need a bit of distance first though.

Rosie Fletcher, Associate Editor, *Total Film*

In no particular order

Ringu (1998)
The Exorcist (1973)
Dead Ringers (1988)
Rosemary's Baby (1968)
Invasion Of The Body Snatchers (1978)
Night Of The Living Dead (1968)
Eyes Without A Face (1960)
Carnival Of Souls (1962)
Quatermass And The Pit (1967)
The Thing (1982)



Paul Garner, Freelance illustrator for *SFX*

In no particular order

Bride Of Frankenstein (1935)
Planet Of The Apes (1968)
The Shining (1980)
Alien (1979)
Rosemary's Baby (1968)
An American Werewolf In London (1981)
Dark Star (1974)
Ed Wood (1994)
Invasion Of The Body Snatchers (1978)
The Thing (1982)

Only one of the above not from the '80s or earlier. You can tell when I grew up!

SFX Writers' Film & DVD Star Rating Averages

So who's a generous marker at *SFX* and who's a mean marker? Or who just gets to watch the better films? We looked at a year's worth of marks (2012) from our most regular reviewers and averaged them out. The results are intriguing: film companies, you need Dave Golder to review your products!

Dave Golder: 3.5 (from 33 reviews)
Ian Berriman: 3.4 (from 73 reviews)
Nick Setchfield: 3.4 (from 26 reviews)
Dave Bradley: 3.3 (from 11 reviews)
Russell Lewin: 3.1 (from 29 reviews)
Richard Edwards: 3.0 (from 19 reviews)
Jordan Farley: 3.0 (from 51 reviews)
Will Salmon: 2.8 (from 28 reviews)
Steve O'Brien: 2.3 (from 11 reviews)
Sarah Dobbs: 2.1 (from 13 reviews)

Dave Golder, *SFX* online editor

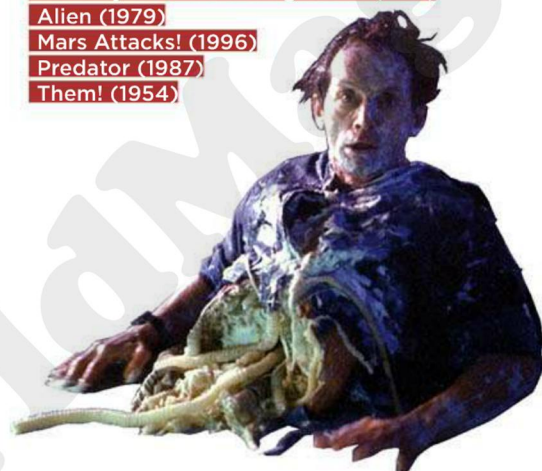
In no particular order

The Fly (1986)
Forbidden Planet (1956)
The Thing (1982)
Labyrinth (1986)
Alien (1979)
Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (1991)
Jason And The Argonauts (1963)
Gremlins 2: The New Batch (1990)
Minority Report (2002)
The Skin I Live In (2011)

Toby Hadoke, Comedian, actor and *Doctor Who* aficionado

In no particular order

Quatermass 2 (1957)
Aliens (1986)
Tremors (1986)
Starship Troopers (1997)
The Thing (1982)
The Day The Earth Caught Fire (1961)
Alien (1979)
Mars Attacks! (1996)
Predator (1987)
Them! (1954)





Miles Hamer, Freelance writer for SFX

1	Dead Of Night (1945)
2	Alien (1979)
3	Ghostbusters (1984)
4	Back To The Future (1985)
5	An American Werewolf In London (1981)
6	Labyrinth (1986)
7	Blade Runner (1982) (Final Cut)
8	Return Of The Jedi (1983)
9	Total Recall (1990)
10	Toy Story 3 (2010)

Steve Jarratt, Freelance writer for SFX

In no particular order

Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (1977)
Blade Runner (1983)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
The Fly (1986)
The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers (2002)
Alien (1979)
Minority Report (2002)
The Thing (1982)
The Abyss (1989)
Jurassic Park (1993)



Russell Lewin, Editor

1	Back To The Future (1985)
2	Star Wars (1977)
3	The Truman Show (1998)
4	A Clockwork Orange (1971)
5	The Birds (1963)
6	Rosemary's Baby (1968)
7	Mickey's Christmas Carol (1983)
8	Back To The Future Part II (1989)
9	Yellow Submarine (1968)
10	2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)



Miriam McDonald, Freelance writer for SFX

1	The Addams Family (1991)
2	Beetlejuice (1988)
3	Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
4	The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001) (I love all three, but thought I'd better pick just one)
5	Twelve Monkeys (1995)
6	The Lost Boys (1987)
7	Starship Troopers (1997)
8	Bad Taste (1987)
9	Braindead (1992)
10	Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992)

Some not that great, critically speaking, but I love them all... Rather a lot of Peter Jackson on the list. And it does rather scream, "I was a teenager in the 1990s."



Mark Mitchell, Art Editor and Illustrator

In no particular order

They Live (1988)
Alien (1979)
The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
Excalibur (1981)
Fantasia (1940)
The Day The Earth Stood Still (1951)
Brazil (1985)
The Thing (1982)
Dark City (1998)

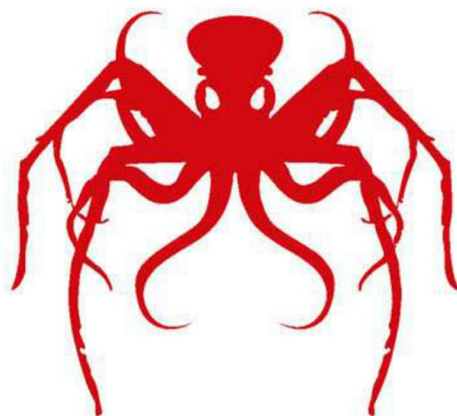


Paul Mitchell, Illustrator

1	Blade Runner (1982)
2	Jason And the Argonauts (1963)
3	Silent Running (1972)
4	The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
5	Escape From New York (1981)
6	Time Bandits (1981)
7	Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
8	Alien (1979)
9	The Changeling (1980)
10	The Ninth Configuration (1980)

Jayne Nelson, Freelance writer for SFX

1	The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers (2002)
2	Superman (1978)
3	Spirited Away (2001)
4	Monsters (2010)
5	Aliens (1986)
6	The Medusa Touch (1978)
7	A Matter Of Life And Death (1946)
8	Back To The Future (1985)
9	Tremors (1990)
10	Watchmen (2009) (the US extended cut, not the crappy cut we got over here)



Steve O'Brien, Freelance writer for SFX

1	The Wicker Man (1973)
2	Back To The Future (1985)
3	Star Wars (1977)
4	A Clockwork Orange (1971)
5	The Wizard Of Oz (1939)
6	Alien (1979)
7	Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991)
8	The Exorcist (1973)
9	Rosemary's Baby (1968)
10	The Truman Show (1998)

Andrew Osmond, Reviewer for SFX

In no particular order

Laputa Castle In The Sky (1986)
King Kong (1933)
Time Bandits (1981)
Groundhog Day (1993)
Superman II (1980)
The Terminator (1984)
ET: The Extra Terrestrial (1982)
The War Of The Worlds (1953)
Frankenstein (1931)
The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers (2002)

Matthew Pellet, Reviewer for SFX

1	The Thing (1982)
2	The Dark Knight (2008)
3	Back To The Future (1985)
4	The Matrix (1999)
5	Aliens (1986)
6	Jurassic Park (1993)
7	Serenity (2005)
8	Cube (1997)
9	Night Of The Living Dead (controversially, the 1990 remake - crap ending I know but at least Barbara's bearable)
10	Braindead (1992)

Bugger, that's hard to do, actually.

[Looks at the ones that didn't quite make it and sobs]





Will Salmon, Freelance writer for SFX

- 1 The Wicker Man (1973)
- 2 The Life Aquatic With Steve Zissou (2004)
- 3 Fahrenheit 451 (1966)
- 4 Batman Begins (2005)
- 5 The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001)
- 6 The Cabin In The Woods (2011)
- 7 Donnie Darko (2001)
- 8 28 Days Later (2002)
- 9 Casino Royale (2006)
- 10 Aliens (1986)

Cavan Scott, Freelance writer for SFX

- 1 Ghostbusters (1984)
- 2 Aliens (1986)
- 3 Bride Of Frankenstein (1935)
- 4 Iron Man (2008)
- 5 Shaun Of The Dead (2004)
- 6 Live And Let Die (1973)
- 7 Superman II (1980)
- 8 The Wicker Man (1973)
- 9 Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan (1982)
- 10 Hellboy II: The Golden Army (2008)

After doing this list I discovered I largely like sequels rather than the originals (except for *Ghostbusters* and *Iron Man*).



Nick Setchfield, SFX Features Editor

- In no particular order
- Raiders Of The Lost Ark (1981)
 - Superman (1978)
 - Unbreakable (2000)
 - Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (1977)
 - It's A Wonderful Life (1946)
 - The Land That Time Forgot (1975)
 - Star Wars (1977)
 - The Spy Who Loved Me (1977)
 - On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969)
 - Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan (1982)

Nicole Smith, SFX work experience

- 1 The Dark Knight (2008)
- 2 Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991)
- 3 28 Days Later (2002)
- 4 Inception (2010)
- 5 Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban (2004)
- 6 How To Train Your Dragon (2010)
- 7 The Birds (1963)
- 8 Scott Pilgrim Vs The World (2010)
- 9 The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King (2003)
- 10 Thor (2011)

Calum Waddell, Freelance writer for SFX

I absolutely hate top 10 lists (I was genuinely appalled at the results of the recent *Sight & Sound* debacle for instance) and so my sole defence for doing one here is to offer at least a few choices that, I think, won't make everyone else's favourites.

- 1 Pinocchio (1940)
- 2 Fantasia (1940)
- 3 Night Of The Living Dead (1968)
- 4 On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969)
- 5 Lone Wolf And Cub: Baby Cart At The River Styx (1972)
- 6 Lisa And The Devil (1974)
- 7 Suspiria (1977)
- 8 The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- 9 An American Werewolf In London (1981)
- 10 A Nightmare On Elm Street (1984)

David West, Freelance writer for SFX

- In no particular order
- They Live (1988)
 - Moon (2009)
 - Delicatessen (1991)
 - A Chinese Ghost Story (1987)
 - Akira (1988)
 - The Host (2006)
 - Outland (1981)
 - 30 Days Of Night (2007)
 - Flash Gordon (1980)
 - Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind (2004)

James White, Freelance writer for SFX

- 1 Ghostbusters (1984)
- 2 The Empire Strikes Back (1980)
- 3 Brazil (1985)
- 4 Blade Runner (1982)
- 5 Back To The Future (1985)
- 6 Aliens (1986)
- 7 Donnie Darko (2001)
- 8 Wall-E (2008)
- 9 Star Trek II: The Wrath Of Khan (1982)
- 10 Moon (2009)

Selina Wilken, Freelance writer for SFX

- In no particular order
- Back To The Future (1985)
 - The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring (2001)
 - Star Wars (1977)
 - The Cabin In The Woods (2012)
 - Battle Royale (2000)
 - Inception (2010)
 - Avengers Assemble (2012)
 - Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind (2004)
 - Ghostbusters (1984)
 - Princess Mononoke (1997)

It's in the stars

SFX's star ratings mean as follows: Five stars: Superb. Four stars: Good. Three stars: Average. Two stars: Poor. One star: Terrible. But other magazines differ. *Total Film*, for instance, have three stars denoting "good". Is there a "right" definition, and in general how do people perceive star ratings? Does three stars mean different things to different people? We asked some ordinary members of the public (and Mark Mitchell), and here's what they said. Bless 'em.

Mark Mitchell

I see three stars as "Wait till it's on TV".

Helen Ashman

I'd say three stars means "don't worry if you miss it at the cinema, wait until it's released on DVD". To be fair I never really go by reviews, if I like the look of it I'll watch it.

Jim Brunt

I'd think it was nothing special but not awful either. Would I see it? Depends what it was. If I'd not heard of it, I'd probably not bother. If it was something I was looking forward to, I'd probably go anyway.

Irma Page

To me it's a "If you like this sort of stuff it's worth giving it a go. If not, missing it won't be a massive loss". It can also mean that the film is flawed in a way that makes it unbalanced, ie the story was good but the performances were crap, or vice versa.

Evan Ray

It means that the film sucks balls but the reviewer doesn't want to piss off the publicist.

Michaela Gray

To me three stars means it's good - better than average, but not outstanding. If it's not something I had much of an interest seeing, it wouldn't move me to go to the cinema, but if it's something I was already excited about, it wouldn't put me off.

Jonathan Wright, Freelance writer for SFX

- 1 A Matter Of Life And Death (1946)
(Because it combines all that's best about Hollywood and European cinema. Not just best SFX-style movie, best movie ever)
- 2 Spirited Away (2001)
- 3 Alien (1979)
- 4 Galaxy Quest (1999)
- 5 Quatermass And The Pit (1967)
- 6 Donnie Darko (2001)
- 7 Star Trek (2009)
- 8 Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind (2004)
- 9 I Married A Witch (1942)
- 10 Pan's Labyrinth (2006)

The worst sci-fi film ever is of course *Star Wars*, not especially rubbish in and of itself, but oh its effect on wider culture...

M
IS FOR

Marvel

Celebrating the comics giant which has made a big splash in the cinema

WARNING

These are the views of one slightly eccentric man, and could be controversial!



RUSSELL "Rusty" LEWIN / Tara "American" Bennett / Mark "Falcon" Mitchell / Mark "Videoboy" Critchell
WRITER/EDITOR BLADE REVIEWS LAYOUT TEA-MAKER

Just as Stan "the Man" Lee is one of the greatest people to have ever walked the face of the Earth – and definitely one of the greatest ever writers of fiction – Marvel Comics, with whom he has been inexorably linked for more than 50 years, is a company that has made this world of ours a better place to live in. And that's the gospel truth.

In recent years, Marvel has also triumphed in the cinema, the likes of the *Spider-Man* and *Iron Man* films and *Avengers Assemble* drawing in huge crowds all around the world. Computer wizardry has made it possible for Marvel's visions to be magnificently realised on the big screen, in a way they never could be on television in the past.

With a number of projects in planning, including sequels and reboots in most of the major franchises, the future for Marvel is bright. So now seems like a good time to look at Marvel in the cinema: first, one critic offers thoughts on all the movies, then we suggest what *should* be in *Amazing Spider-Man 2*, why DC sucks and preview delights still to come!

**Russell
Lewin**
PRESENTS

The Marvel movies

Technical note: below are films that were released theatrically in the US, explaining why there is no mention of the unreleased *The Fantastic Four* (1994) and 2005's *Man-Thing* (a TV movie in the States).

HOWARD THE DUCK 1986



1.5
STARS

A humanoid duck saves the world. Crass and awful movie for one of Marvel's less endearing creations, with a story seemingly aimed at slow five-year-olds, but weirdly done in an adult manner. It sucks, big time.

DIRECTOR: Willard Huyck

CAST: Lea Thompson, Jeffrey Jones, Tim Robbins, Ed Gale

THE PUNISHER 1990



2.5
STARS

An armed vigilante battles city criminals. Based on one of Marvel's darkest characters, this serves up nearly non-stop action and doesn't trouble the grey matter too much.

DIRECTOR: Mark Goldblatt

CAST: Dolph Lundgren, Louis Gossett Jr, Jeroen Krabbé

BLADE 1998



3 STARS

A half-human/half-vampire takes self-loathing to a new level by exterminating vamps he comes across.

Wesley Snipes cuts an imposing figure as the Daywalker infused with the superpowers of a vampire, yet without the pesky weaknesses. He shows off some mad moves and goes up against a cocky Dorff who gives great villain. Overall, the film comes off as low-budget despite some great action sequences.

DIRECTOR: Stephen Norrington

CAST: Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Stephen Dorff

CAPTAIN AMERICA 1990



1 STAR

It's Cap to the rescue when the Red Skull kidnaps the US President.

A superhero movie that stinks to high heaven – it's abysmally scripted and produced on a budget of a packet of Twinkies. Action sequences are ham-fisted and repetitive, the hero is limited (to say the least), the plot is inane, even the wardrobe is awful... just complete dreck.

DIRECTOR: Albert Pyun

CAST: Matt Salinger, Scott Paulin, Kim Gillingham

X-MEN 2000



3 STARS

Two opposing groups of super-powered mutants battle it out for supremacy. Glossy, watchable action flick with a decent assortment of costumed characters.

DIRECTOR: Bryan Singer

CAST: Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, Halle Berry, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos

BLADE II 2002



3 STARS

Blade looks for his lost mentor, Whistler, and then battles Reaper vamps.

Del Toro brings his dark aesthetic to the franchise and elevates the quality of the series with his rich attention to detail. He crafts some great visuals, especially the three-ply jaws of the Reapers. There's more blood and gore with lots of noisy action but the story isn't the most engaging.

DIRECTOR: Guillermo del Toro

CAST: Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Ron Perlman, Leonor Varela



SPIDER-MAN 2002

A young student is bitten by a radioactive spider which gives him remarkable arachnid powers. He soon has to use them against the evil Green Goblin.

Finally this great comic book superhero is done justice on celluloid, not least in the special effects department which convey Spider-Man's movement convincingly. For keen fans of the strip it's a fondly assembled treat with a perfect choice of lead actor, and for anyone else, an exciting blockbuster with a good heart.

DIRECTOR: Sam Raimi

CAST: Tobey Maguire, Willem Dafoe, Kirsten Dunst

4.5
STARS



DAREDEVIL 2002

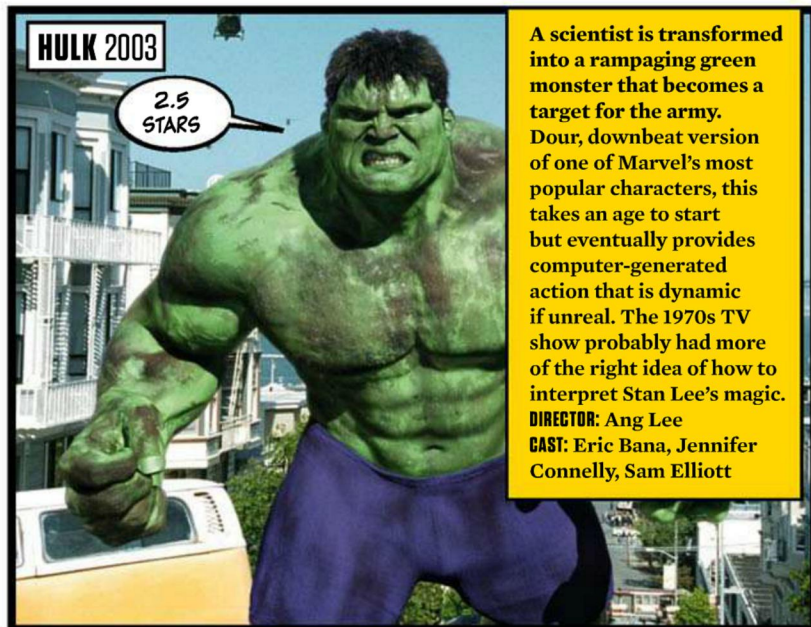
2.5
STARS

A blind lawyer is also a spectacular costumed superhero.

While hardly in *Spider-Man*'s class, this is a half-decent adaptation with some boisterous action – Bullseye is particularly lively. The film looks like it was cut down from a greater length and is rather too keen to promise a sequel.

DIRECTOR: Mark Steven Johnson

CAST: Ben Affleck, Jennifer Garner, Colin Farrell, Michael Clarke Duncan



HULK 2003

2.5
STARS

A scientist is transformed into a rampaging green monster that becomes a target for the army.

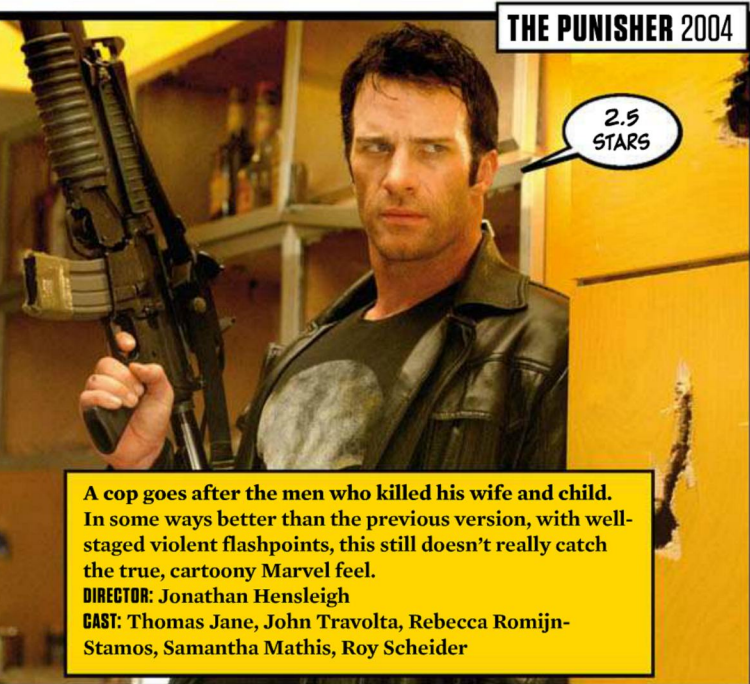
Dour, downbeat version of one of Marvel's most popular characters, this takes an age to start but eventually provides computer-generated action that is dynamic if unreal. The 1970s TV show probably had more of the right idea of how to interpret Stan Lee's magic.

DIRECTOR: Ang Lee

CAST: Eric Bana, Jennifer Connelly, Sam Elliott



4.5
STARS



THE PUNISHER 2004

2.5
STARS

A cop goes after the men who killed his wife and child. In some ways better than the previous version, with well-staged violent flashpoints, this still doesn't really catch the true, cartoony Marvel feel.

DIRECTOR: Jonathan Hensleigh

CAST: Thomas Jane, John Travolta, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, Samantha Mathis, Roy Scheider



BLADE: TRINITY 2004

2.5
STARS

Blade gets two sidekicks to join him on the hunt for Drake (aka Dracula).

The franchise backs away from the horror and oddly leans more towards comedy and sci-fi. The lumpy story has Blade facing down Dracula and Daystar, a bio-weapon engineered to kill all bloodsuckers. Snipes is barely present in the film, so Biel and Reynolds do their best to take up the slack.

DIRECTOR: David S Goyer

CAST: Wesley Snipes, Kris Kristofferson, Jessica Biel, Ryan Reynolds, Dominic Purcell

What we'd love to see in future Spider-Man films

In next year's Spidey sequel the main villain will be Electro, but we reckon there were plenty of other contenders, and will be again. Using original comic books, we choose a few of our favourite vintage stories and explain why they'd light up the big screen.

we'd insist is that Vinnie Jones doesn't reprise his role as the unbeatable one.

Hobgoblin

The creation of Hobgoblin in *ASM* 238 was a masterstroke: rather than come up with yet another mark of Green Goblin, Marvelites hit upon the idea of an almost-Green Goblin, and it felt fresh and vital. His true identity, often teased at being revealed without being for several years, was compelling drama (see over). **WHY IT'D BE GREAT** The films could pull the same trick as the comics: have ourselves another Goblin without it being of the Green variety. So you'd get the flying, the pumpkin bombs, the razor-sharp bats – all that – but it'd be the brand new Hobgoblin! Who is in many ways cooler than the original anyway.



✦ Mysterio / (Amazing Spider-Man 67)

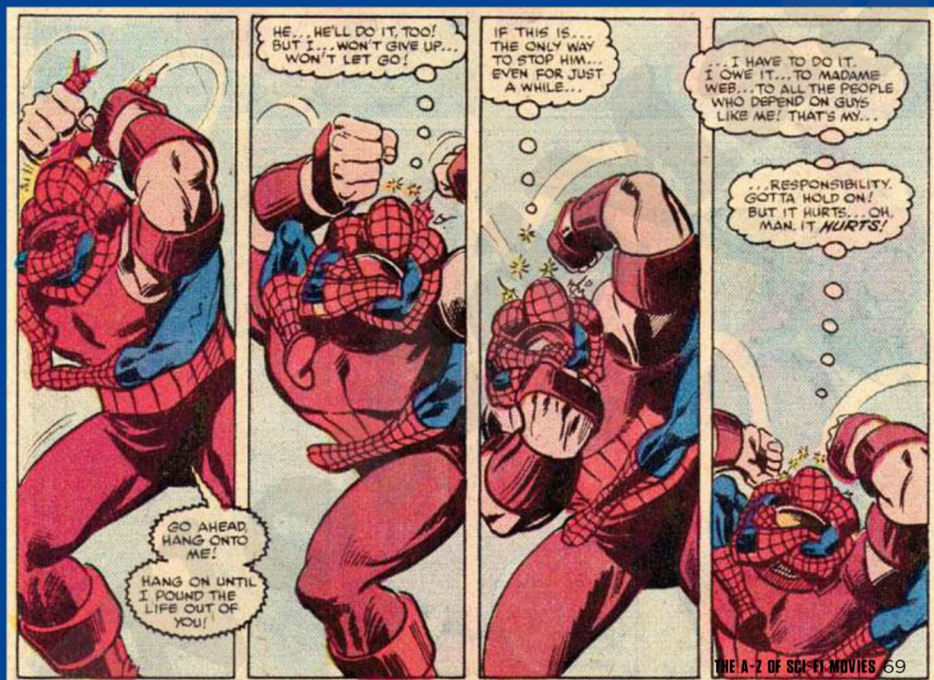
Spidey's fourth encounter with Mysterio was a lot of fun, with the goldfish-bowled one making the webslinger believe he'd shrunk him down to the size of a doll. Of course, he hadn't, but both us and the webcrawler were fooled for a while. **WHY IT'D BE GREAT** Mysterio is an evil master magician – and everyone loves magic, right? They could get people like Derren Brown and The Twins to advise on the sort of hi-tech pranks the new version of the villain could pull off. Modern sfx could result in some truly fantastic visuals and mindbending scenarios.

✦ Juggernaut / (ASM 229-230)

The two-part Spidey-Juggernaut showdown is one of the greatest in the history of *Spider-Man* comics (see *SFX* 183's *We Love SF*). It conveys the sense that this is *one hell* of a battle, one that really matters, but one which we haven't a clue how Spidey will win. How he eventually does is ingenious (it involves concrete). **WHY IT'D BE GREAT** Okay, we know this one can't happen (at the moment, anyway) because of rights issues. But we can dream: this would be tremendous, a pulsating battle royale of David against the Goliath, David being the most agile, fastest, most pliable David ever, the Goliath an uncompromising, relentless brute. All

✦ Firelord / (ASM 269-270)

The wallcrawler's battle with Galactus's pal Firelord was almost as brilliant as his tussle with Juggernaut three years previously. Again, it seems like an unwinnable battle – Spidey throws everything New York's got at the angry Herald, only eventually succeeding through cumulative punches and a bit of luck. **WHY IT'D BE GREAT** Firelord would be a completely different sort of villain for the films, one from the depths of space and a thousand times more powerful than your average baddie. Just imagine how modern-day CG would make their scrap look, and what a challenge for the hero used to battling Earth-based rotters.



X-MEN 2 2003

3.5
STARS

A fanatical military man attacks Professor Xavier's band of mutants.

A superior sequel, for what it's worth, which generally succeeds in reproducing a comic-strip vibe. As franchises go, *X-Men* isn't the easiest to warm to but it's aided by the different superpower exhibitions and a starry cast.

DIRECTOR: Bryan Singer

CAST: Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, Halle Berry, Rebecca Romijn-Stamos, James Marsden, Anna Paquin, Brian Cox

SPIDER-MAN 2 2004

Spider-Man battles Doctor Octopus while his alter ego Peter Parker has problems with his love life.

Very well-received sequel with some of the most spectacular battles between super-powered folks ever put on film, but perhaps a little bit too much romance. Mostly, though, it's one of the very best Marvel movies, full of wit, individual style, great performances (Maguire is just wonderful in his role) and an aura of being that bit special.

DIRECTOR: Sam Raimi

CAST: Tobey Maguire, Alfred Molina, Kirsten Dunst

ELEKTRA 2005

2 STARS

A female warrior chooses to protect the father and daughter she has been ordered to assassinate.

A weirdly awful movie – it's difficult to say why it so dismally fails; maybe it's because the script is invisible, the locations unsympathetic and the action meaningless. It's not a goer at any rate.

DIRECTOR: Rob Bowman

CAST: Jennifer Garner, Goran Visnjic, Kirsten Prout, Terence Stamp

FANTASTIC FOUR 2005

3 STARS

A group of astronauts gain superpowers. The foursome are finally properly brought to the big screen, and the result is not-too-difficult to digest froth. It's a little by-the-numbers but not objectionably so, with the most valid criticism probably being that they spend most of the movie establishing the team in an effort to set up a franchise, and the climactic battle is rather brief.

DIRECTOR: Tim Story

CAST: Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis, Julian McMahon

X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 2006

2 STARS

A new drug is developed to help mutants become "normal". The weakest *X-Men* movie is an over-egged pudding with not much of a story and too many characters who make little impression; it just doesn't feel like a movie made with care and affection (it was actually rush-released).

DIRECTOR: Brett Ratner

CAST: Hugh Jackman, Patrick Stewart, Ian McKellen, Famke Janssen, Halle Berry, Rebecca Romijn, James Marsden

FANTASTIC 4 – RISE OF THE SILVER SURFER 2007

2.5 STARS

A being from space engages the team. A children's film and one which does its job; after several extremely long, po-faced and "dark" superhero films (hi, *Batman Begins* and *Superman Returns*) it's quite refreshing to see one that is brief, sweet-natured and light-hearted. The special effects are as good as any of its bigger cousins.

DIRECTOR: Tim Story

CAST: Ioan Gruffudd, Jessica Alba, Chris Evans, Michael Chiklis, Lawrence Fishburne

SPIDER-MAN 3 2007

4 STARS

Peter Parker plans to propose to Mary Jane but is distracted by three villains. A highly enjoyable exercise in popular moviemaking; it's rare to see a comic book adap breathe such life into its characters. It also gains points because the battle royales are dazzling, the plot is dense yet cleverly structured and it successfully provokes a variety of emotions, including laughter, sorrow and excitement.

DIRECTOR: Sam Raimi

CAST: Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst, James Franco, Thomas Haden Church

THE INCREDIBLE HULK 2008

3 STARS

Bruce Banner heads to Brazil but is pursued by General Ross. Better than the previous attempt to bring the Hulk to the screen, this version has a bit more oomph and better CGI battles, but still doesn't fully emotionally engage (perhaps Banner should have been given a bit more dialogue, for starters). It's reasonable comic book fun, though, honestly enough done.

DIRECTOR: Louis Leterrier

CAST: Edward Norton, Liv Tyler, Tim Roth, William Hurt

PUNISHER: WAR ZONE 2008

3.5 STARS

After hunting down and killing several criminals, the Punisher encounters the deadly Jigsaw. Demented fun for a violent night out: the appeal of films like this must be our innate desire to see justice done and baddies get blown to bits in various inventive ways. Perhaps the most liberated of the three *Punisher* films.

DIRECTOR: Lexi Alexander

CAST: Ray Stevenson, Dominic West, Doug Hutchison, Colin Salmon

And the Hobgoblin is...

Marvel's premier title knew how to keep us in suspense. In the late '80s the identity of the Hobgoblin was oft teased on the cover as being revealed inside, but until issue 289, wasn't. As these four beauties show, it was cheekily promised many times, until the final "This is not a trick!" cover for issue 289 ("unlike all the others" they should have added) when Hobs was outed as... well, if you don't know, you'll have to read it to find out!



2 STARS

GHOST RIDER 2006

A motorcycle stunt rider sells his soul to save his cancer-ridden father's life. Johnny Blaze comes to the screen in a vehicle that suits him: dumb, brash and full of pyrotechnics. Blaze is visually a treat when he's on fire and amusingly Cage-esque when not, but this is really only for motorbike fans or living dead fans.
DIRECTOR: Mark Steven Johnson
CAST: Nicolas Cage, Eva Mendes, Wes Bentley



IRON MAN 2008

3 STARS

A super-wealthy industrialist who makes armaments decides to build himself a powerful battle suit instead. One of Marvel's more intriguing, but not top drawer, superheroes gets the fantastic-special-effects and impressive-cast treatment; the result is a reasonably involving romp, a little thin plot-wise perhaps, but with enough wide appeal to make it one of the biggest box office hits of the year.
DIRECTOR: Jon Favreau
CAST: Robert Downey Jr, Jeff Bridges, Gwyneth Paltrow, Terrence Howard



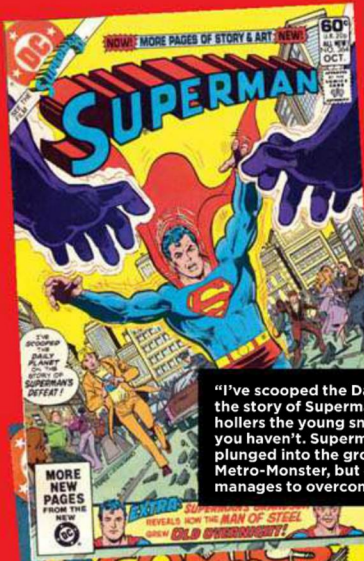
X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE 2009

3.5 STARS

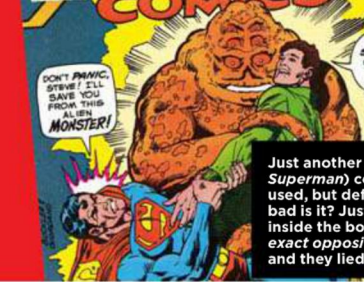
How the man called Wolverine gained his adamantium skeleton and lost his memory. Fans were largely snuffy about this prequel but it's good rollicking fun, a tale of revenge punctuated by top action sequences with a variety of super-powered freaks.
DIRECTOR: Gavin Hood
CAST: Hugh Jackman, Lieke Martens, Danny Huston, Lynn Collins

DC for DeCeiving

One reason this writer loved Marvel comics so much more than DC ones when he was growing up was because DC covers *lied* all the time! (Another was that they weren't very good.) So here are our favourite – or is that least favourite? – deceiving DC covers. Of course Marvel was completely above doing this (ahem)...



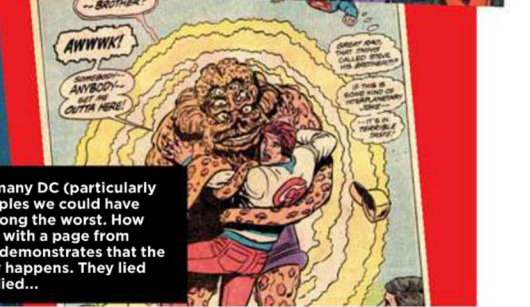
"I've scooped the Daily Planet on the story of Superman's defeat!" hollers the young snapper. No, you haven't. Superman is indeed plunged into the ground by the Metro-Monster, but easily manages to overcome him.



Just another of many, many DC (particularly *Superman*) cover examples we could have used, but definitely among the worst. How bad is it? Just compare with a page from inside the book, which demonstrates that the exact opposite actually happens. They lied and they lied and they lied...



These two – who are almost identically facially, to make things more confusing – look pretty angry, huh? You'd get the Impression Captain Marvel was an aggressor who'd made the costume swap happen. Nope, it was Mr Mxyzptlk, and this excerpt from the strip inside reveals the rather more cordial meeting of the two superheroes.



IRON MAN 2 2010

2.5 STARS



Tony Stark is targeted by a homicidal Russian. Considering that this looked like being one of the great superhero sequels, it has to be judged a disappointment: it's perfectly watchable and well made, but it doesn't break any new ground and lacks an especially compelling storyline. Rourke's Whiplash isn't effective because he's indecipherable, Johansson's Black Widow seems like an afterthought and only War Machine packs a punch; if only there could have been more sequences like the one at the Monaco car race.
DIRECTOR: Jon Favreau
CAST: Robert Downey Jr, Mickey Rourke, Gwyneth Paltrow, Scarlett Johansson, Don Cheadle

THOR 2011

The god of thunder comes to Earth to learn some humility. Thor never was a particularly interesting or likeable superhero and this production doesn't do much to make him any more empathetic, or a big-time player, but it's not a bad movie, although the pacing isn't quite right and locations a little odd.
DIRECTOR: Kenneth Branagh
CAST: Chris Hemsworth, Natalie Portman, Tom Hiddleston



2.5 STARS

X-MEN: FIRST CLASS 2011



4.5
STARS

Two groups of mutants clash at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Remarkably proficient prequel with a strong, compelling storyline, imaginative (and not hard to follow) action sequences, some rich performances and an awareness of wider issues. Were all superhero movies so successful.

DIRECTOR: Matthew Vaughn

CAST: James McAvoy, Michael Fassbender, Kevin Bacon, Rose Byrne, Jennifer Lawrence, January Jones



2.5
STARS

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE FIRST AVENGER 2011

A skinny kid keen to fight in World War Two is turned into a super soldier. One of the many "trailers" for *Avengers Assemble* is solid superhero fare: it looks great, if a little brown, it's free of cynicism, and the first half works particularly well. But it lacks that certain something – maybe it's because the lead character is a little wooden and unsympathetic, the relationship between Evans and Atwell never sparks, or that the Red Skull isn't the most spectacular of villains.

DIRECTOR: Joe Johnston

CAST: Chris Evans, Hayley Atwell

GHOST RIDER: SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE 2012

Johnny Blaze attempts to save a young boy from the devil. A semi-sequel that somehow manages to be even worse than its predecessor: it's grey and muddy, obviously shot on a limited budget, the CGI is poor, the script mostly mumbo jumbo and, most importantly, the Ghost Rider just isn't anywhere near being a decent superhero.

DIRECTOR: Mark Neveldine, Brian Taylor

CAST: Nicolas Cage, Violante Placido, Ciaran Hinds, Idris Elba



1.5
STARS

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE 2012



3.5
STARS

Nick Fury brings a group of superheroes together to fight evil Asgardian god Loki. Marvel's long-awaited amalgamation of many of their top heroes into one picture has to be judged a pretty fair success, and a good example of a living, breathing comic strip: the individual super-types prove to be better suited to a team movie – they're probably not quite strong enough to star in a really great film of their own – and when it all comes together, particularly in the second half, comic book fans will not be the only people in the audience feeling a satisfying thrill. But those who praised it to the skies should remember that this is partly because it could have been a disaster. Finally, it's worth noting that Hulk's encounter with Loki is the funniest thing in years.

DIRECTOR: Joss Whedon

CAST: Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Chris Hemsworth, Mark Ruffalo

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2012



4
STARS

Upcoming Marvel movies

Something to get excited about on each of the ones announced... Words: Jordan Farley

Expected 2013 *The Wolverine*

Wisely, writer Christopher McQuarrie (*The Usual Suspects*) has ignored *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* in favour of a post-*X-Men: The Last Stand* tale that takes inspiration from Frank Miller's renowned Eastern-set story.

Thor: The Dark World

Thor was the surprise smash of summer 2011. The entire gang returns for the sequel, including much-loved mischief maker Loki, while *Game Of Thrones* director Alan Taylor takes over duties behind the megaphone.

Iron Man 3

This threequel adapts Warren Ellis's celebrated *Extremis* series, and sees the return of supremely-talented '80s action movie screenwriter Shane Black to the director's chair.

Expected 2014 *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*

The subtitle alone should get four-colour fans excited, as this sequel also serves as an adap of one of the comics' most beloved runs, with Bucky turning to the dark side.

Guardians Of The Galaxy

It's *The Avengers* in space with a racoon that fires guns. What's not to love? *Slither's* twisted James Gunn is writing and directing – another pleasingly left-field choice from Marvel Studios.

The Amazing Spider-Man 2

The Amazing Spider-Man had a note-perfect cast – but veered too closely to Sam Raimi's barely 10-years-old adaptation. The sequel should shake things up, with no origin to retell and Jamie Foxx on board as Electro.

X-Men: Days Of Future Past

Bryan Singer, director of the best X-Movie (*X-Men 2*), returns for this *First Class* sequel based on the renowned *X-Men* comics run. All manner of X-Movie cast members return.

Expected 2015 *The Avengers 2*

Joss Whedon already proved his blockbuster chops with the first *Avengers*, but without all that pesky assembling to drag down the first act, *The Avengers 2* could be a non-stop joygasm.

Ant-Man

This long-gestating adaptation of the Hank Pym-starring strip is a passion project of Edgar Wright's. His flair behind the camera will bring a different flavour to Marvel's cinematic offerings, and test footage shown at Comic-Con 2012 went down a treat.

Fantastic Four

Found-footage superhero movie *Chronicle* was one of the best films of 2012. That film's director Josh Trank is rebooting the troubled *Fantastic Four* franchise. 'Nuff said!

A student is transformed into a superhero after being bitten by a radioactive spider.

A hasty reboot but one that doesn't disappoint: it may not be quite as much fun as the Raimi movies but it's confidently done and pushes most of the right buttons for a multiplex audience (and it's quite amusing the way it does many things deliberately differently from its predecessors). Performances are fine, the 3D's decent, humour is in place and the action is nicely judged; the only criticisms a Spider-Fan might have would be that Peter Parker isn't nerdy enough and Spidey isn't strong enough – but after 50 years the webslinger proves that he's still the best superhero in town.

DIRECTOR: Marc Webb

CAST: Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone, Rhys Ifans, Denis Leary, Martin Sheen, Sally Field

MLitt in COMICS STUDIES

The MLitt in Comics Studies offered by the University of Dundee is a unique one year postgraduate course that allows you to study comics and graphic novels from a number of perspectives, looking at the history of comics, their formal properties, key genres, the growth of autobiographical and digital comics, and the international scope of the medium.

Students enrolled on this course write essays, research dissertation topics of their own choosing, and have the opportunity to create their own comics as part of the assessment. This combination of the academic and the practical is supported by numerous workshops with top comics industry professionals. There are also many comics events at Dundee, including exhibitions, and conventions such as Comics Day. Guests have included Grant Morrison, Dave Gibbons, Frank Quitely, Warren Ellis, Bryan and Mary Talbot, Alan Grant, John Wagner, Cam Kennedy, Pat Mills, Emma Vicelli, Nana Li, Colin MacNeil, Nicole Streeten, Robbie Morrison, Alan Davis, Tanya Roberts, and many others. If you are interested in studying or creating comics this course is for you.

To learn more about the course contact:
Humanities Postgraduate Secretary,
enquiryhumanities@dundee.ac.uk
or
Dr Chris Murray,
c.murray@dundee.ac.uk

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With thanks to Colin MacNeil for the illustration. Design by V14 Studios www.v14.co.uk

On Saturday March 30th 2013 Dundee will host its first Comics Expo. This will also be an Open Day event for those wanting to learn more about Comics Studies at Dundee. Details can be found at: <http://on.fb.me/14h1Hdq>



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was open, not enough to permit a rush of water over the gills. The water was a little other motion: an occasional correction of the apparently aimless course by the rail or lower the pectoral fin - as a bird changes direction by dipping one wing and raising the other. These were slightless, the black and the other fishes transmitted nothing extraordinary to the small, primitive brain. The fish might have been asleep, save for the movement dictated by countless millions of years of constant continuity, making the notation border common to other fish. The fluttering flaps pushed oxygen-bearing water through its gills, it survived only by moving. Once stopped, it would sink to the bottom and die. Nox. The land seemed almost as dark as water, for there was no moon. A that separated

We rifle through the yellowing pages of dusty tie-ins to discover how not to write a book of the film...

Words: Cavan Scott

Long before Blu-rays, DVDs and movie downloads we had novelisations, those hastily-written potboilers based on the latest films. Not only did they give us a chance to relive the action of the big screen, they often offered an alternate view of events. Largely written during a film's gestation using early scripts, authors unwittingly included scenes and concepts that would end up abandoned.

Unfortunately, while many are remembered fondly, the majority were clunky at best and atrocious at worse.

Here we present the worst mistakes in novelisation history, the definite guide on how not to write a blockbuster novelisation.

1 GIVE YOUR CUTE, IF WRINKLY, EXTRA TERRESTRIAL HERO AN INAPPROPRIATE CRUSH

Ah, ET. What a loveable, long-fingered little fellow he was. How we gasped when we first saw him, wept when he died and cheered when he pulled off the best resurrection since 33AD.

And then we read William Kotzwinkle's novelisation. Did we really need to know that the randy sod had the horn for Elliot's mum? In one exceptionally creepy sequence the amorous alien creeps into Mary's bedroom while she sleeps, pads over to her bed and gazes longingly at his "goddess"? Yes, the visitor from another world waxes lyrical about her radiant hair, butterfly-like eyelids and petal-lips, but we know what's really going through his otherworldly mind: "MILF, MILF, MILF!" To add insult to injury, we also learn that he's 10,000 years old. ET - the galaxy's dirtiest old man.



2 THROW IN A CLUNKY SEX SCENE

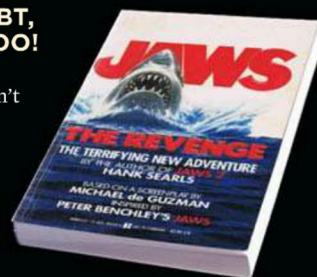
Sometimes your characters want to do more than just look, sometimes they want to get down and dirty, which is where things start going wrong. Take the worst example of recent years: Kirk getting it on with an emerald-skinned siren in Alan Dean Foster's *Star Trek* (2009). "The multiple kisses Kirk was deploying along the length of the body beneath him," Foster writes, "were going off like very tiny photon torpedoes." About as erotic as Klingon Blood Pie.

3 CHANGE THE CHARACTERS BEYOND RECOGNITION

Phantom Of The Paradise, Brian De Palma's cult musical update of Gaston Leroux's classic novel revolves around the innocent and pure performer, Phoenix. However, by the time she reaches the pages of Bjarne Rostaing's novelisation she's flashing her bits on stage, singing songs about sodomy and shagging anything that moves. Weirdly, Rostaing's novel also eradicates the film's supernatural elements including the central pact with the devil.

4 IF IN DOUBT, ADD VOODOO!

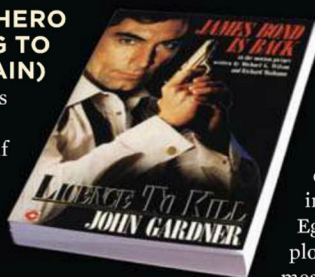
Sometimes novelisations don't remove supernatural elements - they crowbar them in. *Jaws: The Revenge* is universally recognised as one of the worst movies committed to celluloid. Not only does the titular shark go on a vengeance-fuelled killing spree, it also roars. Say no more. Unfortunately Hank Searl had to say more. He had to transform such nonsense into a readable



novel. To make sense of everything poor old Hank placed the toothy assassin under the thrall of a voodoo witch doctor with a grudge against the Brodies. We'll let you decide if this preternatural addition saves a dodgy plot or completely jumps the Great White.

5 LEAVE YOUR HERO WITHOUT A LEG TO STAND ON (AGAIN)

Talk about sharks, '80s Bond author John Gardner found himself with a problem when tasked to novelise *Licence To Kill*. In the film, Felix Leiter loses his leg to a shark, a sequence based on an event in Ian Fleming's 1954 *Live And Let Die*. Determined to tie the novelisation of the Timothy Dalton film into the Fleming literary canon, Gardner was faced with a problem. Surely even Felix wouldn't be unlucky enough to lose two legs to two different sharks over the course of 30-odd years. The solution? Have the shark chow down on the CIA agent's prosthetic leg instead. Yeah, that's far more believable – especially when the bad guys don't even notice.



transform into a hawk and control the mind of jungle animals. Admittedly, none of this is Monette's fault – the Predator's design process was notoriously problematic – although the decision to have Dutch using a spear to blow up the alien's spaceship, or to give Billy psychic powers, is frankly bizarre.

7 GET EASILY DISTRACTED

Alan Arnold obviously got bored when writing the novelisation of 1985's *Young Sherlock Holmes*. After wrapping up the dancing cream cakes he veered off and indulged in page after page of obscure Egyptian lore that had little to do with the plot. Worst of all, he'd only left himself a few measly paragraphs to portray the film's climax. Bad form, as Watson would no doubt say.

8 USE YOUR NOSE

Smells are extremely evocative in descriptive packages. Used well, they can bring a fantasy world to life. Sadly, Neal Barrett did not use them well when faced with the unenviable duty of novelising the 1995 *Judge Dredd* travesty. Throughout the pages we read of stinks "strong enough to gag a goat" or, worse still, a stench powerful enough "to gag a hooker-droid". If that

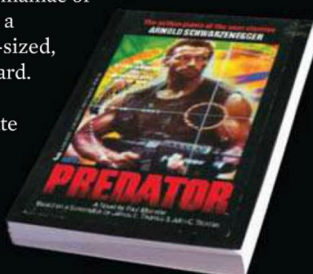
"Did we really need to know that ET was a randy sod who had the horn for Elliot's mum?"



The Predator you never saw.

6 WRITE THE BOOK BEFORE THE CENTRAL MONSTER HAS EVEN BEEN DESIGNED

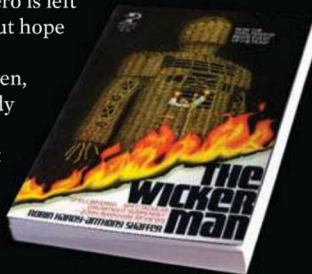
The Predator is one of the most iconic movie monsters of all time. Unfortunately when poet Paul Monette came to write the novelisation, the final design had yet to be agreed. So instead of the mandibled maniac of the film we get a generic gorilla-sized, blue-scaled lizard. The result is a strange alternate reality where the Predator can not only cloak itself, but also



wasn't bad enough, old Joe later encounters a reek the "odour of flatulence and fear, fury and the sour smell of sweat". Flatulence and fear? We knew Stallone's *Dredd* stank, but that's ridiculous.

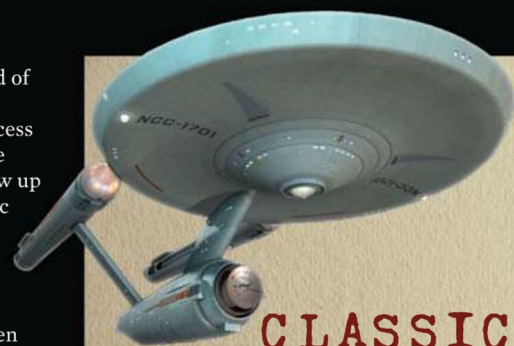
9 UNDERMINE THE ENDING

The bleak final reel of *The Wicker Man* contains one of the most chilling images in the history of cinema. Our hero is left doomed without hope of salvation or rescue. Why then, did Robin Hardy and Anthony Shaffer think it was a good idea to add an epilogue to their 1978 novelisation that suggests that Howie lived to see another May Day? Blasphemy.



10 DON'T EVEN INCLUDE THE ENDING

The blurb for Alan Dean Foster's novelisation of *Terminator Salvation* promised "the full story of this much-anticipated movie". A bold claim, especially as the book didn't actually contain the ending at all. However, the author wasn't to blame. Instead the film studio decreed that printing the ending might compromise the movie. Eventually, the climax was published on the publisher's website, but it was the equivalent of having the last page of your novel ripped out while it was still sitting in the bookshop. ☹

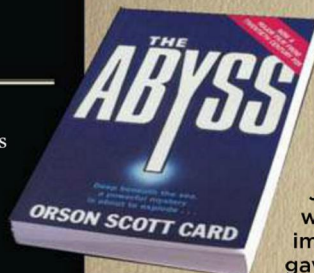
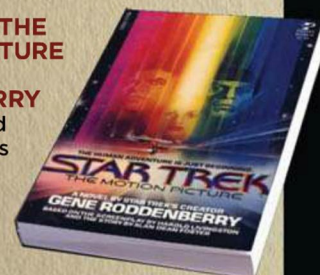


CLASSIC NOVELISATIONS

We've had the nadir, but what about novelisation highs? Here's a selection of some of the best books of the film.

STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE BY GENE RODDENBERRY

The Great Bird of the Galaxy's retelling of the first *Trek* snorefest adds oodles of backstory – such as the woman in the transporter accident being one of Kirk ex-lovers – while also giving Jimbo the chance to state once and for all that he and Spock were never more than friends.

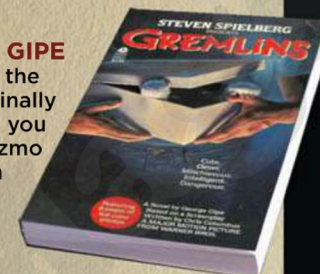


THE ABYSS BY ORSON SCOTT CARD

The blueprint on how to write a fantastic novelisation. James Cameron was reportedly so impressed that he gave his actors excerpts of an early draft to better understand their characters' backstory.

GREMLINS BY GEORGE GIPE

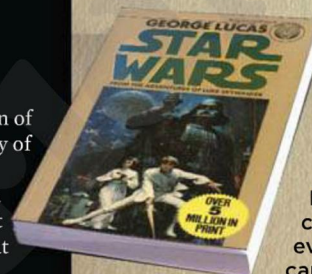
The origins of the Gremlins are finally revealed – did you know what Gizmo is the creation of an alien by the name of Mogturnman?



STAR WARS: FROM THE ADVENTURES OF LUKE

SKYWALKER BY GEORGE LUCAS

Sorry George, you're not fooling anyone. Lucas's ghost-writer, Alan Dean Foster, introduced concepts that eventually became canon such as the Lord of the Sith and the Emperor's name. Luke's relationship with fan-favourites Wedge and Biggs were also beefed up.



Should we care whether genre movies win Academy Awards or not? Let's discuss...

Words: Cavan Scott

Illustration: Mark Mitchell

As the glitz and glamour of the Academy Awards season approaches, you can hear genre fans already sharpening their knives. Every year the complaint is the same – just what has the Academy got against genre? At first glance the gripe seems valid. Outside of technical categories, science fiction, fantasy and horror movies hardly ever triumph. But perhaps we're focusing on the wrong question. Instead of wondering why the Academy doesn't support genre films, maybe we should be asking if genre needs the Oscars in the first place.

The Academy Awards themselves were first awarded in 1929, in a ceremony at Hollywood Boulevard's Hotel Roosevelt. However, genre filmmakers would have to wait 74 years before they saw one of their own accept the Best Picture award. There had been plenty of near misses. *The Exorcist* received 10 nominations in 1973, including Best Picture, but only managed to bring home Best Sound and Best Adapted Screenplay. *Annie Hall* stopped *Star Wars* from attaining the top prize in 1977, while *Chariots Of Fire* saw off *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* in 1981.

Even *ET* couldn't get his glowing fingers around the Best Picture statue in 1982 – that honour went to *Gandhi*. While *The Silence Of The Lambs* did walk away with Best Picture in 1991, not everyone could agree that it was even a horror film, so it was left to 2003's *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* to become the first fantasy film to receive the honour. Granted, genre has dominated the Best Visual Effects category, first introduced in 1939, with everything from *Bedknobs And Broomsticks* and *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom* to *Alien* and *Avatar* picking up a gong, but why such a long wait for the top spot?

Well, we're not alone. Other genres have fared just as badly. The Western movie, that mainstay of 1950s cinema and Sunday afternoon television, didn't get a sniff of Best Picture until 1990's *Dances With Wolves* and Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* in 1992. Likewise, while often nominated, crime thrillers nabbed their last win in 2006 with *The Departed*.

While all of these categories regularly put bums on seats in the multiplexes, they hardly ever end up in one of those golden envelopes.

Why? Because rightly or wrongly, they don't fit the Oscar mentality. (At least *Life Of Pi* and *Beasts Of The Southern Wild* have been nominated this year, both borderline SF.) Like comedy laugh-fests or crime flicks, fantasy and science fiction movies just aren't seen to be particularly worthy. Oscar winners are supposed to reflect the human condition, full of pain, angst and raw, unadulterated emotion. This is, of course, poppycock. Good genre cinema, be it horror, romantic comedy or even a toe-tapping musical, can be any or all of these things. At its best, science fiction isn't about the flashiest special effects but what drives the human spirit. When it comes to what has become known as "Oscar bait", though, the message is diluted by spaceships, monsters and death rays.

Does the Academy not see this? Is it blind to the central message of the latest blockbusters? Are the voting members really that stupid? The answers are no, of course not and definitely not.

GETTING NOTICED

It all boils down to what the Awards are actually for. Yes, they are there to showcase the best cinema has to offer, but they also have another purpose. The Oscars exist to ensure that films that may slip by unnoticed are recognised, the kind of pictures that haven't got a million-dollar special effects budget. Okay, we're not talking about independent dramas here – most nominated films are still major studio productions, but hardly ever hail from populist franchises. How many people, before last year's awards, would have even considered going to see a black and white silent movie? Outside the UK, would a film about a stuttering king have found such a large audience? Would they go to see a film about a man who dresses up as a bat to fight crime? Well, actually, they probably would.

The fact is that the larger genre films, the ones we'd like to see winning Best Picture, already have their fanbase, they already fill the cinemas. Most studios don't even bother to nominate their blockbusters. Why would they? The likes of *Avengers Assemble* and *Skyfall* have already pulled in the punters, and will continue to do so, whether Robert Downey Jr or Daniel Craig are presented with golden trophies or not.

In a similar way, genre films continue to attract the best in the industry and studios will be able to use Academy Awards in their marketing even if the film itself isn't recognised. Bruce Wayne's butler is an Academy Award winner. Another dish out 007's orders. Even Gandalf is an Oscar nominee.

Yes, accolades are always welcome, and the respect of one's peers is something to aspire to, but the best of Hollywood and beyond already want to appear in genre films while millions of fans rush for the box office on opening day. Surely that is as important as a golden statue or a sequined frock on the red carpet. In fact, isn't it better? ☺

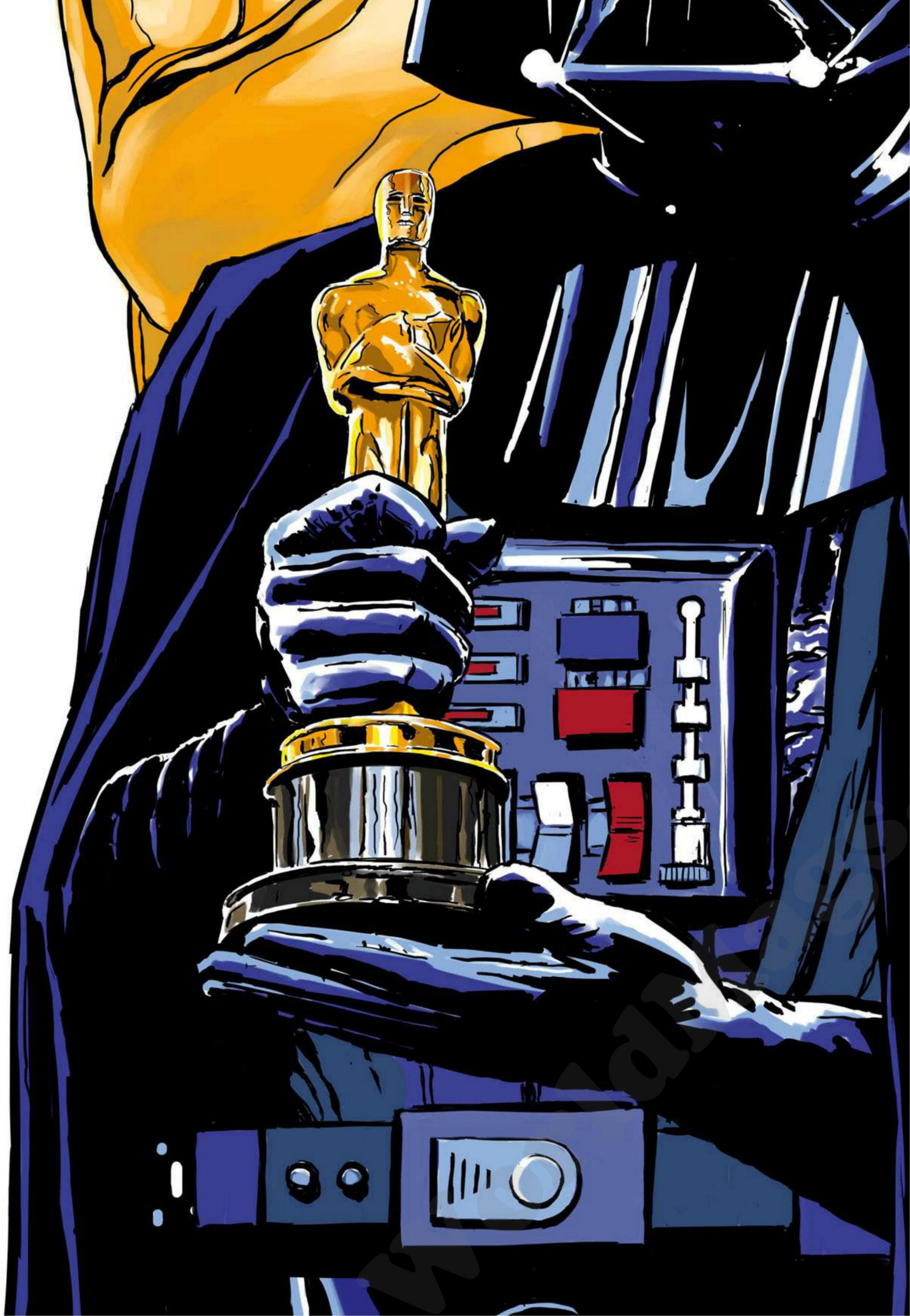
"The fact is that the larger genre films, the ones we'd like to see winning Best Picture, already fill the cinemas"

And the winner is...

No one can take away genre's dominance in the Visual Effects and Make-up categories. Here are those winners in full...

Thanks to
Nicole Smith

Best Visual Effects		Best Make-up	
2011	Hugo	2010	The Wolfman
2010	Inception	2009	Star Trek
2009	Avatar	2006	Pan's Labyrinth
2007	The Golden Compass	2005	The Chronicles Of Narnia
2006	POTC: Dead Man's Chest	2003	LOTR: The Return Of The King
2005	King Kong	2001	LOTR: The Fellowship Of The Ring
2004	Spider-Man 2	2000	How The Grinch Stole Christmas
2003	LOTR: The Return Of The King	1997	Men In Black
2002	LOTR: The Two Towers	1992	Bram Stoker's Dracula
2001	LOTR: The Fellowship Of The Ring	1991	Terminator 2: Judgement Day
1999	The Matrix	1988	Beetlejuice
1996	Independence Day	1986	The Fly
1993	Jurassic Park	1981	An American Werewolf In London
1991	Terminator 2: Judgement Day		
1990	Total Recall		
1989	The Abyss		
1987	Innerspace		
1986	Aliens		
1985	Cocoon		
1984	Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom		
1983	Return Of The Jedi		
1982	ET: The Extra Terrestrial		



P
IS FOR

Psychology

How different – and how honest – are fans of various movie genres? Our fiendish experiment tests them out...

Words: Russell Lewin

THE IDEA

Are horror-heads more grasping than anime fans? What about fans of fantasy, connoisseurs of classics, or black-and-white-film buffs? Would a lost sexy movie be more likely to be returned to its owner than a lost superhero movie?

We set out to test the honesty of those who came across our “lost” movies, planted in London over one weekend. All the DVDs were as good as new, but none of them were factory-sealed. They were either from our own collection or bought from Amazon Marketplace for a few quid.

THE METHOD

We went to the London MCM Expo on the weekend of 27-28 October 2012 on a press pass. At times throughout the weekend, besides collecting anecdotes for *SFX*'s Event Horizon pages, we left different DVDs, all in open, padded, stamped addressed envelopes, in several different toilets. We then returned home to Bath and waited to see what films would find their way back to us...

THE RESULTS

So how many of the DVDs were returned to their rightful owner? Answer: **NONE!** Bloody none!!! The little thieving **BASTARDS** didn't return a single one. And after waiting for them for three months we don't think that's going to change now.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Never do these sorts of experiments ever again. Failure is written all over our face. Best turn the page and move onto the next feature, there's nothing to see here... ☹

Where the experiment took place in October.



Security wasn't anything special.

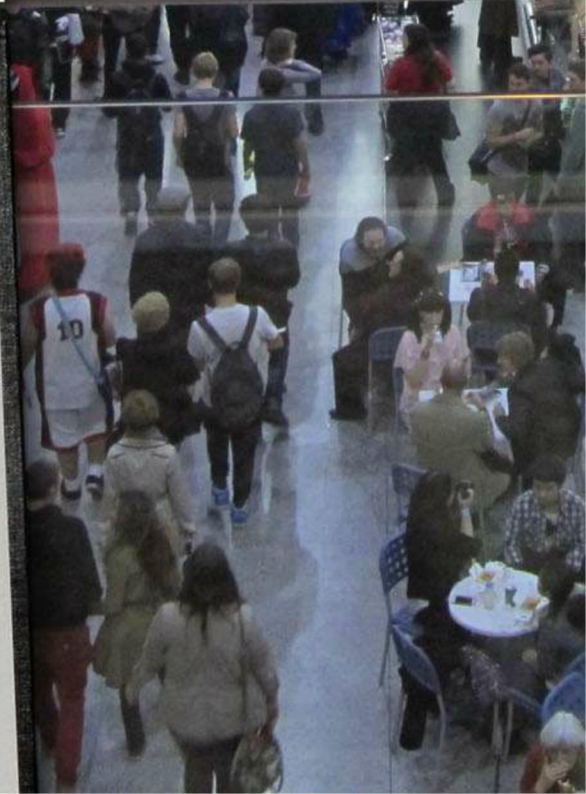


We want hair like that.



I travelled to London with a haversack packed with DVDs on what felt like a vaguely nefarious mission; I couldn't shake the feeling that I was a sort of low-calorie suicide bomber. I was a little afraid that security at Expo would want to check my bags and I'd have to somehow come up with a reason for carrying 12 DVDs in open envelopes. “Just not got round to posting them to a mate yet” would probably have been the feeble excuse I'd have used.

At Expo I was desperate to get rid of them, partly because, combined, they were a fair weight and my back was aching. But leaving them around the halls seemed too risky an idea: I could just see the headlines, as I was walking to the dole office, “Security alert causes evacuation at Expo: white packages blamed”. There was also the risk of “Scuse me mate, I think you've dropped this...” And so I had to secrete my packages in the toilets, which of course meant the male toilets – if I'd tried to enter the ladies I dare say there would have also been a security alert of a different kind.





The 12 DVDs

THE HORROR FILM

Friday Night (1985)
WHAT IT IS Not-bad-at-all comic horror recently remade starring Colin Farrell and David Tennant.

THE CHILDREN'S FILM

Shrek The Third (2007)
WHAT IT IS The third in the *Shrek* series is somewhat short on spark, but youngsters probably won't notice.

THE ANIME

The Girl Who Leapt Through Time (2006)

WHAT IT IS Impressive, imaginative anime about a "talented" teenager, later made into a live-action film.

THE SUPERHERO FILM

Superman 2 (1980)
WHAT IT IS Enjoyable follow-up to the 1978 blockbuster, starring the late, great Christopher Reeve.

THE SEXY FILM

Labia Warrior Princess (2002)
WHAT IT IS Low-rent softcore porn, like *Xena*, but with rather more hot lesbian action.

THE VERY BAD FILM

Starcrash (1978)
WHAT IT IS Adorably awful Italian *Star Wars* rip-off that's hilarious and incompetent but has a great John Barry score.

THE CLASSIC

Alien (1979)
WHAT IT IS Ridley Scott's acclaimed sci-fi horror that gave rise to numerous follow-ups and spin-offs.

THE BLACK & WHITE FILM

Curse Of The Fly (1965)
WHAT IT IS Third in the *Fly* series, this one shot in Britain, directed by Hammer veteran Don Sharp.

THE ROMANCE

The Time Traveler's Wife (2009)
WHAT IT IS Decent adaptation of Audrey Niffenegger's popular novel, with Eric Bana and Rachel McAdams as the time-crossed lovers.

THE COMEDY

Liar Liar (1995)
WHAT IT IS Very funny Jim Carrey-starring fantasy comedy about a lawyer who finds he *has* to tell the truth at all times.

THE FANTASY FILM

Jack The Giant Killer (1962)
WHAT IT IS Sunday matinee fare with dated but endearing special effects, similar to a Harryhausen *Sinbad* film.

THE SHAKESPEARE FILM

Macbeth (1997)
WHAT IT IS Low-budget production of the [part-fantastical] Shakespeare tragedy, with Sean Connery's son Jason in the lead role.



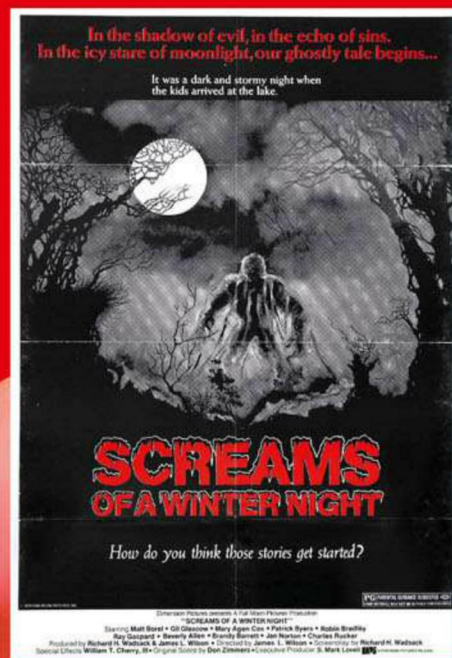


Q
IS FOR

Quentin

Words: Russell Lewin

Quentin Tarantino bigs up squillions of obscure SF and horror films. But how many are actually any good?! Time to find out...

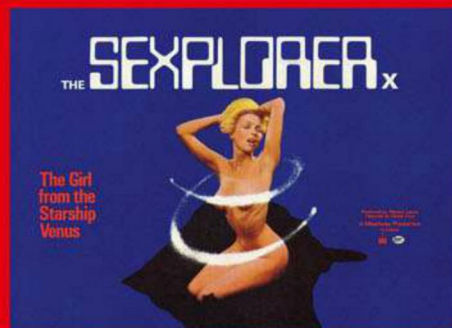


MOVIE Screams Of A Winter Night (1979)

BIGGING UP Tarantino introduced this film at his 2007 LA Grindhouse Film Festival. He owns a print of what he reckons was the first "kids-go-to-the-lake" scare flick, with an innovative structure and excellent technical credits considering its small budget.

ANY GOOD? Not really – a 16mm horror anthology that pads out the bits between the [poor] stories with lots of chatter from over-aged teens. It's a PG so don't expect many gory scares.

VERDICT Not worthy!



MOVIE Sexplorer (1975)

BIGGING UP Supposedly Quentin's favourite British sexploitation film, he showed it at the LA Grindhouse festival in 2007.

ANY GOOD? It's a marginal cut above the rest of '70s Brit sex comedies, but the fleshy start promises titillation it doesn't follow up on, and the aliens' unbelievable stupidity soon grates.

VERDICT Not worthy! We like sex comedies as much as the next man, but this doesn't have enough of either.



MOVIE Night Of The Lepus (1972)

BIGGING UP Included in Tarantino's "Coolest Movies of All Time" list in September 2007.

ANY GOOD? Nein! Because it's a film about giant bunny rabbits on a killing spree! As *Psychotronic's* Michael Weldon wrote: "Sometimes real rabbits are shown hopping around miniature sets. Sometimes actors get to wear bunny suits. Who would agree to appear in such an absurd film?" Sadly, Janet Leigh, just 12 years after *Psycho*.

VERDICT Not worthy! (But, in a way, hysterical fun)



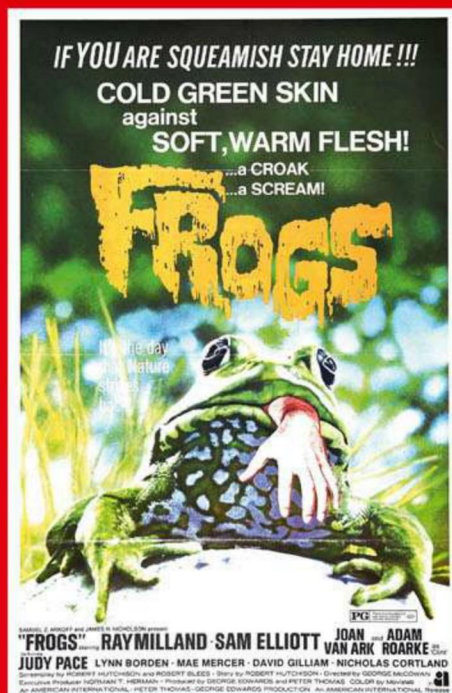
MOVIE The Strange Vice Of Mrs Wardh (1971)

BIGGING UP Tarantino used the score from this film in *Kill Bill Volume 2*, and has spoken fondly of it.

ANY GOOD? Not bad – a twisty giallo with all the giallo emblems (beautiful babes, black-gloved killers, razor blades) intact. Perhaps doesn't quite hang together as a whole though. *The Killer Must Kill Again* is a better giallo.

VERDICT Worthy!

"Quentin Tarantino" is not nearly as cool as a name when you remove the "Tarantino" from it, is it?

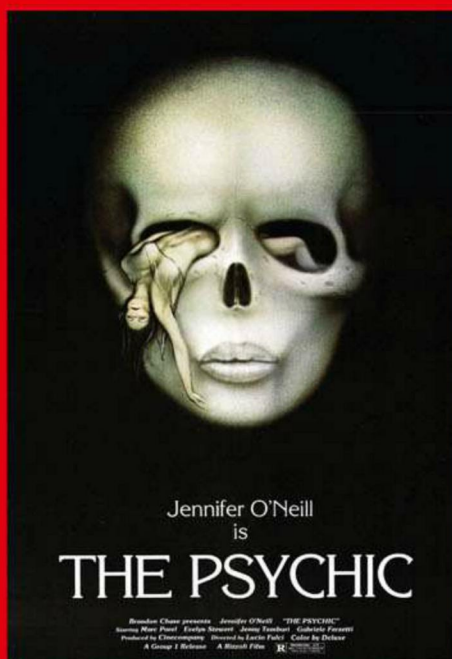


MOVIE Frogs (1972)

BIGGING UP Included in Tarantino's "Coolest Movies of All Time" list in September 2007.

ANY GOOD? Absolute garbage! The director seems to think he's chilling us to the bone by endlessly showing footage of frogs and other creatures sitting there glowering – and the human beings in it are no more interesting. From the world's most boring opening credits (not to mention the title!), this is a no-hoper.

VERDICT Not worthy!

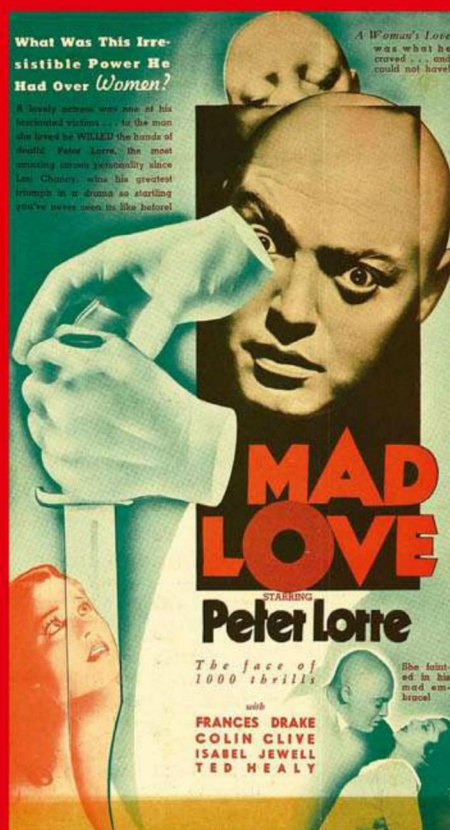


MOVIE The Psychic (1977)

BIGGING UP Listed as one of Tarantino's top 20 grindhouse films.

ANY GOOD? Directed by the Italian Lucio Fulci, known for the explicit likes of *The New York Ripper* and *The House By The Cemetery*, this is actually a gore-free effort. In fact it's a little too demure; well shot, but washing over the viewer for the most part. The final ten minutes are good though, and it has a solid following, so we'll be generous...

VERDICT Worthy! (Just)



MOVIE Mad Love (1935)

BIGGING UP Included in Tarantino's 2007 list of his "Coolest Movies of All Time".

ANY GOOD? Yes. While it won't have you on the edge of your seat in excitement, *Mad Love* (aka *The Hands Of Orlac*) is a film that you can sit back and admire the style of, thanks to its cinematography and set design. It's also worth seeing for Peter Lorre's magnificently demented performance as the surgeon who's so obsessed with an actress that he replaces her damaged hands with those of a murderer.

VERDICT Worthy! Yes it's very old but there's still much to admire.

“There’s lots of chatter from the over-aged teens”



MOVIE Willard (1971)

BIGGING UP Included in Tarantino's "Coolest Movies of All Time" list in September 2007.

ANY GOOD? This horror, about a boy who can make rats do his bidding, was remade in 2003 with Crispin Glover in the lead role. On IMDb, both films, unusually, get exactly the same rating, at the time of writing (6.1), but some critics, and Tarantino, feel this one has the edge. It's a slow but sometimes effective chiller – especially if you hate rats. And who doesn't?

VERDICT Worthy!



MOVIE Werewolf Woman (1976)

BIGGING UP Tarantino liked this one even before he had seen it, selecting it for the first film festival in his name in 1996. The potty-mouthed one loved it so much that subsequent fests had a surprise movie added at the end known as the "Wolf Woman" selection.

ANY GOOD? "Confused" would be a generous adjective for this tacky Italian horror about a woman who turns into a nymphomaniac werewolf. This writer only saw a cut version many years ago, but apparently an uncut version features "large amounts of full frontal female nudity, and semi-graphic depictions of oral sex and masturbation". Which sounds like fun. But it is trash, albeit quite loveable trash.

VERDICT A treat for sleaze-hounds, but nothing to see for quality film fans. Not worthy!



MOVIE Maniac Cop 2 (1990)

BIGGING UP Included in Tarantino's 2007 list of his "Coolest Movies of All Time".

ANY GOOD? It's actually a bit livelier than its predecessor, the film that, ahem, gave the police a bad name. "You have the right to remain silent... forever!" read the tagline. Just like it did on the first *Maniac Cop*.

VERDICT Trashy fun. More fun than *Jackie Brown*, that's for sure. Worthy!

Which makes for a final score of...

5 WORTHY
5 NOT WORTHY

Which means: when Quentin recommends something, seek a second opinion!

Room 237

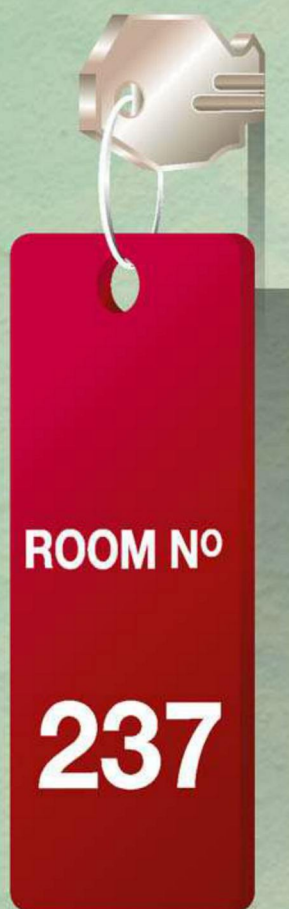
Words: David West

A must-see new documentary spotlights strange and fascinating theories about Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* – we talk to *Room 237* director Rodney Ascher

DANNY:

Mr Halloran, what is in room 237?

But Mr Halloran was lying. There is something in that room.



HALLORAN:

There ain't nothing in room 237, but you ain't got no business going in there anyway. So stay out.

To paraphrase the Eagles, once you enter Room 237, you can check out any time you like but you can never leave. Rodney Ascher's documentary about *The Shining* explores the personal and quite possibly paranoid theories that five different people have about Stanley's Kubrick's mind-bending horror film.

Ascher encountered the movie as a kid and was thoroughly overwhelmed by that first contact. "I had been in the habit of sneaking in to R-rated movies," he says. "Most of them I really enjoyed, *Halloween* or *Alien* were just more intense action movies from my point of view, maybe a little skeezier and a little stronger but I bit off more than I could chew when I tried to watch *The Shining*. It might have just been Wendy Carlos's version of "Dies Irae" at the beginning which puts this cloud of doom and

menace over everything that's going to be happening in the movie. Bill Blakemore, one of our interviewees, describes it as a funeral dirge for mankind. It gives you the implication that this is not just the story of one family but this is something that has cosmic, metaphysical significance about mankind, that these characters are surrogates for the rest of us. It's even the way the camera pulls you up. It was dragging me against my will to someplace I didn't want to go. It was just too much for me."

THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

Young Ascher fled the cinema that day, but has since been pulled back into the film's orbit, becoming drawn into the labyrinthine theories that viewers have found in the story of a man losing his mind in a remote, snowbound hotel. The readings discussed at length in *Room 237*

cover everything from the genocide of the Native Americans to the Moon landings, minotaurs, the Holocaust, hidden meanings in the carpet patterns of the Overlook Hotel, and the notion that the film should be watched backwards as well as forwards – perhaps even simultaneously. "It took a long time before I started to discover different readings," says Ascher. "Bill Blakemore wrote his article about the Native Americans in 1987 just before *Full Metal Jacket* came out and I think I might have dismissed it the first time I heard it. I could only see the movie in the very literal terms of its plot. A few years later I read a book called *Kubrick: Inside A Film Artist's Maze* by Thomas Allen Nelson who did this exploration of the film's numerology, especially the number



237, and he's not the only person who says that *The Shining* is a reversal of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. If *2001* is about man's ascension then this is about man plunging down, mankind's decline. That began to open my eyes and then maybe two years ago my friend Tim Kirk posted this deep *Shining* analysis on my Facebook page and I was instantly fascinated by it. The two of us started exploring all the others. We were like, 'How many more of these are there?' and soon found ourselves at the edge of a bottomless pit."

OFF WITH THEIR HEADS

The popular format for modern documentaries is to have a mixture of

"If *2001: A Space Odyssey* is about man's ascension then *The Shining* is about man plunging down, mankind's decline"

talking head interviews intercut with clips, but Ascher decided to decapitate his film and do away with the talking heads. Throughout the film the viewer never sees the people behind the theories and there are no onscreen titles to identify who is speaking at any given moment. Instead the screen is filled with

The bathroom also has a particular carpet pattern.

So was it Danny who let his dad out of the locked ladder?

scenes from Kubrick's movies, news footage and clips from related films, while the voices remain eerily disembodied. "I did this short film where I just recorded phone interviews and there is something I really liked about how it played, that it made everything more subjective and it put you into this trippy headspace rather than a more literal reality," says Ascher. "In a lot of documentaries, whenever you come back to the talking head shot, it's like if we're underwater then we've come up for air. We reorient ourselves before we dive back down. I just wanted to stay down. I wanted this movie to take place in outer space, in ancient Rome, in the Overlook Hotel and not in somebody's house, anything as mundane and real as that. Some folks have complained that they can't tell the interviewees apart at a certain point but one thing I've found really interesting is when people talk about the most and least compelling parts of the film, often they say things that are from the same guy. I'm not sure they know it's from the same person."

Throughout the making of *Room 237*, Ascher never even met his interview subjects face to face. "I was never in the same room with anyone," he explains. "I mailed people digital audio recorders and talked to them on the phone. I sent them a box with postage paid to return it to me. I did the first interview in January 2011, which was almost exactly a year





before our premiere at Sundance. Before then me and Tim Kirk probably spent eight months researching it, reading up on theories, going on long walks with our kids talking about the genocidal themes in *The Shining*.”

The paranoia of Jack Torrance in *The Shining* seems to infect anyone who spends too much time lost in the film. One of the interviewees in the film talks about his phone being tapped and his taxes being audited. As Ascher worked on the documentary, he found *The Shining* creeping into the dark corners of his mind. “When I was researching these theories I would be up until two or three in the morning reading them and I would get kind of freaked out,” he says. “It felt like I was opening up the book of the Necronomicon and getting a look at some

secret knowledge that I might be better off not knowing. That kind of scared me. Making the film I spent an awful lot of time staring at a keyboard alone in a house resenting any demands on my time from my wife and my son. In my case *The Shining* works very well as a warning to go out and play with your son, take your wife out for the night, let her into your world and tell her what you’re doing, don’t retreat into that horrible dark space of your own mind. I don’t think I’m the first person to see it that way but it worked very clearly as a cautionary tale to me.”

THE MADMAN IN THE MIRROR

The Shining leaves many questions unanswered, even raising the possibility that much of what the viewer sees is

Some of Jack’s hallucinations are more obvious than others.

distorted through the prism of Jack’s own disintegrating sanity. “There are people who suggest that the ghosts are all in Jack’s imagination and they back it up by saying that mostly when he sees them he’s looking into a mirror,” says Ascher. “There is a mirror behind the bar when he’s talking to Lloyd. There is a mirror in the bathroom when he’s talking to Grady. For a haunted house, the biggest supernatural thing that happens is that a door gets unlocked. As [Room 237 interviewee] John Fell Ryan says, maybe Danny let him out? Is Danny trying to lure his dad into a trap? The images are so iconic that they have a way of searing into your subconscious – the blood in the elevators and those little girls, Jack peering through that hole in the door. You see them once and they’ll stay with you forever.”

Why does Jack follow Grady’s suggestions to kill his family?

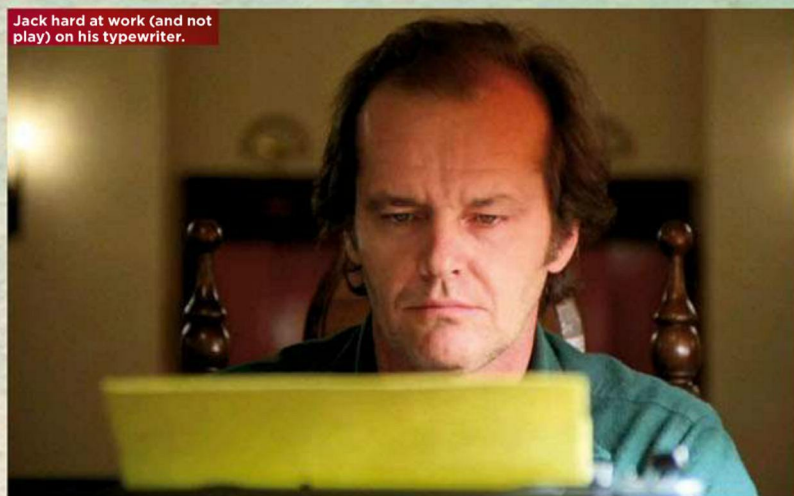
Bill Blakemore, another of the voices heard in *Room 237*, is a journalist who works for ABC News. His perspective reveals that *The Shining* itself can be a mirror. “He says, ‘Well, I think Kubrick is not just an artist but a journalist. He has important things to say about history and he’s putting them, albeit allegorically,

You’ll watch *The Shining* in a different way after seeing *Room 237*.





Danny meets the twins - you can too on page 30.



Jack hard at work (and not play) on his typewriter.

into this film,” says Ascher. “That raises the question, are we all seeing things in the film through the prism of our own experience because we’re self-obsessed and everything we see is just a mirror reflected back to us? Were these things put in intentionally? Are we just seeing what we want to see or our own thoughts put back to us, and does it matter?”

CHAIN REACTIONS

Ascher believes that the film’s very ambiguity is part of why it remains so popular and the subject of such intense scrutiny. “Even on a straight story level there are a ton of questions about what really happened in this story that can keep you up at night speculating,” says Ascher. “What happened to Danny in room 237? This is one of the major turning points in the movie and we never see it. What did the hotel have to offer Jack? That scene in the bathroom where Grady is seducing him into murdering his family, this is where in a conventional horror movie he’d say, ‘You’ll get eternal life’, or ‘Your book will be a bestseller.’ But he doesn’t promise him anything. There are these strange moments when Jack is staring off into space that last a long time and you’re saying, ‘What’s he

doing here? Is he communing with the hotel? Obsessing on his career?”

One voice that is absent from the documentary is that of the man whose novel was the basis for the film – Stephen King, although by all accounts King was not best pleased with Kubrick’s treatment of his creation. “Now that it’s over I’d like nothing more than to hear Stephen King’s reaction to these ideas,” says Ascher. “During the production of the film we decided not to approach anybody involved in the making of *The Shining*. We didn’t want to do a straight behind-the-scenes documentary, to grill someone about what they knew about carpet patterns. We wanted to talk about the chain reactions that happen inside the minds of the audience watching the movie. What happens after a movie leaves the hands of a filmmaker? What happens to a painting after it leaves the hands of an artist? It is now owned by the audience who are going to plumb its mysteries.”

Ignore Mr Halloran’s advice and explore the forbidden corners of the Overlook Hotel and watch Room 237 on DVD courtesy of Metrodome Distribution. It’s out on 11 March.

THE TYPEWRITER LIVES

Words: Russell Lewin

Just what would Jack Nicholson’s character have done without his typewriter, and what would he use if the film was remade now?

Typewriters have all but been replaced by computers. But there is one shop in Bath which still fixes and deals in them! We talked to Bill Collett of Bath Typewriter Service in Oldfield Park, to find out how business is going.



How long have you been doing this?
Ooh, about 35 years.

So have you seen a gradual decline of business?
The last few years, yeah. I still do things like fax machines for hospitals but they’re gradually going now. I used to do a lot of dictating machines but that all went digital last year.

So it was never just typewriters?
Nah, office equipment: adding machines, calculators, fax machines, binding machines...

How many people come into the shop each day now?
Not a lot – they’re dying off! The people that actually use manual typewriters are getting on a bit. Some come a long way looking for ribbons. That one in the black case [points], that’s come from the other side of Oxford to get fixed.

How much do you charge to fix one?
About £40, something like that.

How many places are there left like this?
Not a lot. As I say, things come from a long way now. I don’t think there’s anybody in Bristol left now with a typewriter – they used to come over from Bristol a lot.

Are you sad it’s had its day?
Well it was nice when it was but how the trade’s gone, it’s all throwaway now. Even laser printers, they’re throwaway. The new ones, literally you can buy a new machine with a cartridge in cheaper than they’ll sell you a new cartridge.

This antique one here [indicating] – is this what you do now, clean them up?

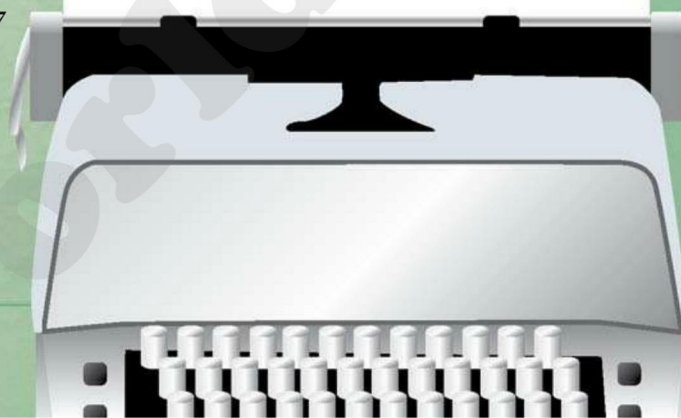
I’ve got one person who’s a collector/dealer who brings a few machines down from the Forest of Dean. But this one, which dates back to 1895, I’ve had hanging about here for years – as I’ve got nothing to do I may as well fix it up...

Does it work?
Oh it’ll work when I’ve finished with it!

So do you think you’ll be closing down in 2013?
Yeah I think I might as well, it’s not worth me coming in here really.



“We went on long walks with our kids talking about the genocidal themes in the film”





Words:
Calum Waddell

Sword & Sorcery

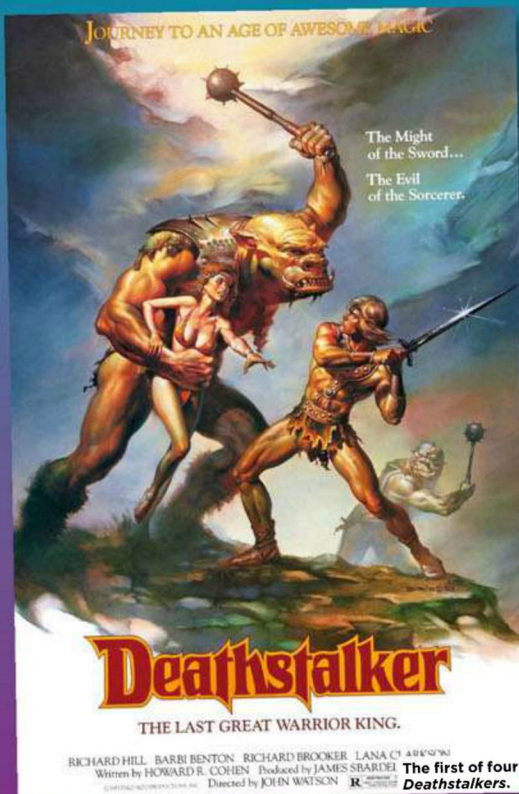




Clash Of The Titans gave the genre a boost.

Mystical menace, muscles galore and marvellous maidens – sword and sorcery gave us a catalogue of craziness featuring worlds in crisis and good vs evil...

With its plethora of babes, beefcake, desert-locations and swashbuckling action, the sword and sorcery genre was a natural fit for both Hollywood blockbusters and low-budget filmmakers. Think about it: such A-list epics as *Clash Of The Titans* (1981), *Excalibur* (1981) and *Conan The Barbarian* (1982) provided audiences with incredible special effects, lavish sets and a roster of familiar faces. On the other hand, for those scraping the bottom of the B-movie barrel, there was the exposed breasts and softcore sex of such VHS-era schlock-fests as *Deathstalker* (1983), *The Warrior And The Sorceress* (1984) and *Amazons* (1986). In other words, this was the sort of shindig which could be done as cheaply or as expensively as the filmmaker could fathom.



Of course, given that the trend has made a semi-comeback of late – with the mediocre multiplex muscle of the *Conan* retread and the rather rubbish rehash of *Clash Of The Titans* – the time is ripe to look back at the genesis of this torrid, testosterone-fuelled form and separate the proverbial biceps from the beer bellies...

Indeed, although it was the early 1980s that introduced us to the biggest titles in the sword and sorcery fad, the basic identity of the genre really stretches back to the 1950s, in which Italy instigated a trend of what became known as “peplum” movies. Also dubbed “sword and sandal” pictures, these professionally made pot-boilers attracted the occasional American actor, set themselves in Biblical or mythological times and often featured an artistic shine that allowed them to play outside of their native nation. While the late Steve Reeves became the name of choice in this avalanche of activity (from 1958 onwards he portrayed Hercules in numerous bouts of oiled-up idiocy) it was the success of *Ben-Hur* (1959) and Kubrick’s *Spartacus* (1960) that inspired an ever-increasing amount of similarly themed Latin-based productions.

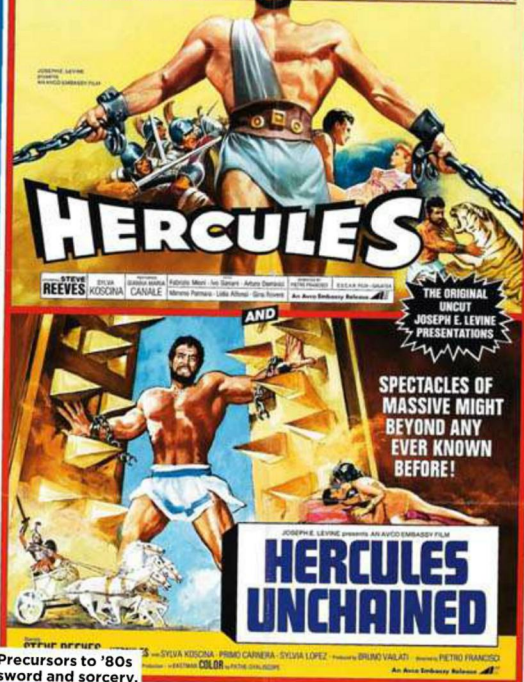
Even though acclaimed director Riccardo Freda had beaten Hollywood to the punch seven years previously with 1953’s *Spartacus The Gladiator*, it was the boffin box office of these American imports which injected a new lease of life into the sight of chiselled, combat-ready ruffians. As if as one, it seemed that every producer in Italy wanted a slice of the tasty period-set pie...

Consequently, from Old Testament tales such as *Samson* (1961), and its numerous sequels, to the Babylonian bombast of the maniacally monikered *Devil Of The Desert Against The Son Of Hercules* (1964), Rome was on a roll. Choice cuts from this remarkably productive period include the kitschy homoeroticism of Freda’s *The Giants Of Thessaly* (1960), the Sergio Leone effort, *The Colossus Of Rhodes* (1961) and the Mario Bava classics *Hercules In The Haunted World* (1961) and *Knives Of The Avenger* (1967). Moreover, across the pond and the peplum

SWORD AND SORCERY

IT TOOK TWO COLOSSAL MOVIES TO TELL THE WHOLE INCREDIBLE STORY!

THE MIGHTY SAGA OF THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST MAN!



Precursors to '80s sword and sorcery.

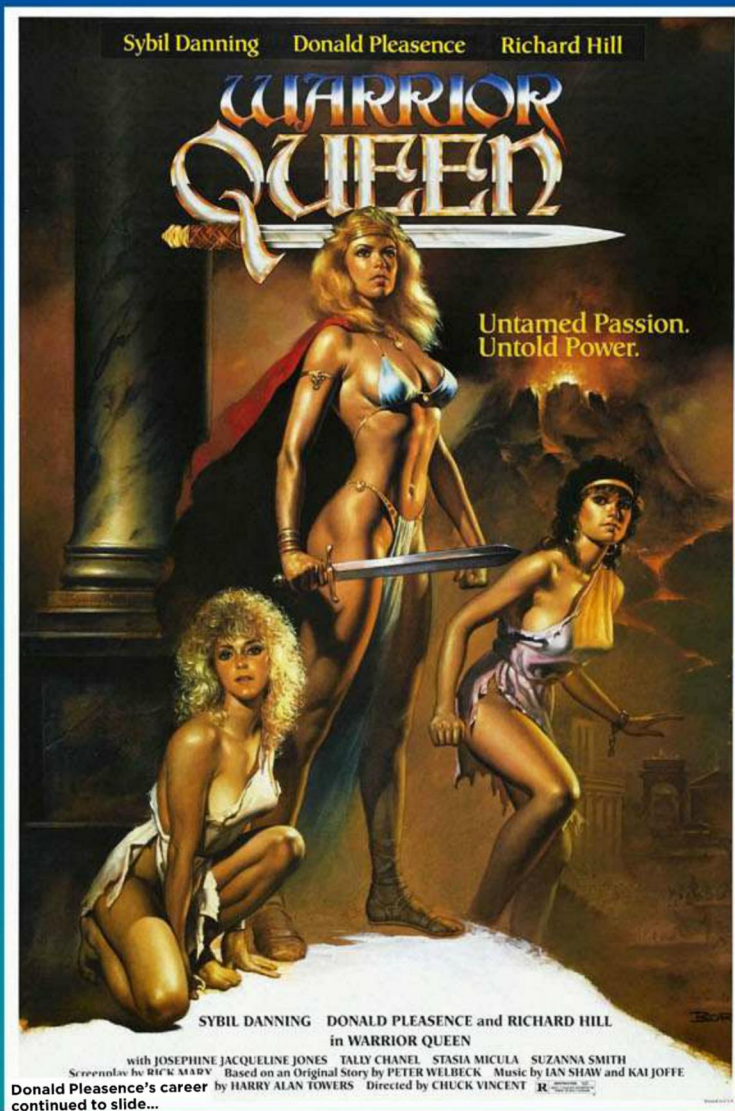
explosion was clearly not going unnoticed – as indicated by the Ray Harryhausen classic *Jason And The Argonauts* (1963), which owes as much to Riccardo Freda and Steve Reeves as it does to Greek mythology, the mega-budgeted Hollywood catastrophe *Cleopatra* (1963) and the Hammer outing *The Viking Queen* (1967). Yet, thanks to an overcrowded market, the era of “sword and sandals” was drawing to a close and, by the end of the '60s, what was once a tidal wave of sound-a-like and play-a-like titles had slowed to a mere trickle.

THE BOOM BEGINS

Thankfully, over a decade later, and following the false start of the British-made bomb *Hawk The Slayer* (1980), the genre began to rise from the ashes – largely due to the one-two punch of the Ray Harryhausen-crafted special effects extravaganza *Clash Of The Titans* and John Boorman’s visually rich adaptation of *Excalibur*. With both films cementing themselves within the top 20 grossing releases of 1981, it was obvious that screen swashbuckling had returned – even if Boorman’s epic, but awkwardly realised, Arthurian opus was by far the less exciting of the two...

“I believe *Clash Of The Titans* was the more successful film at the box office,” relates Harryhausen when asked about how the feature stacked up against *Excalibur*. “We were the 11th biggest hit of the year and we also saved MGM from bankruptcy. But we were also a very different kind of film – we tried to adapt an old Greek classic and modernise it a little.”

Ultimately, the muscular fantasy of *Clash Of The Titans* was also considerably less serious than the olde England of *Excalibur* – yet what both films had in common was a sense of the whimsical: long forgotten lands, age-old stories of kingdoms under threat from tyranny and a special effects budget which provided oodles of aesthetic inspiration. Yet, to really understand the direction in which the genre was moving, one need only look to 1982’s *Conan The Barbarian* – the buff and brutal blockbuster



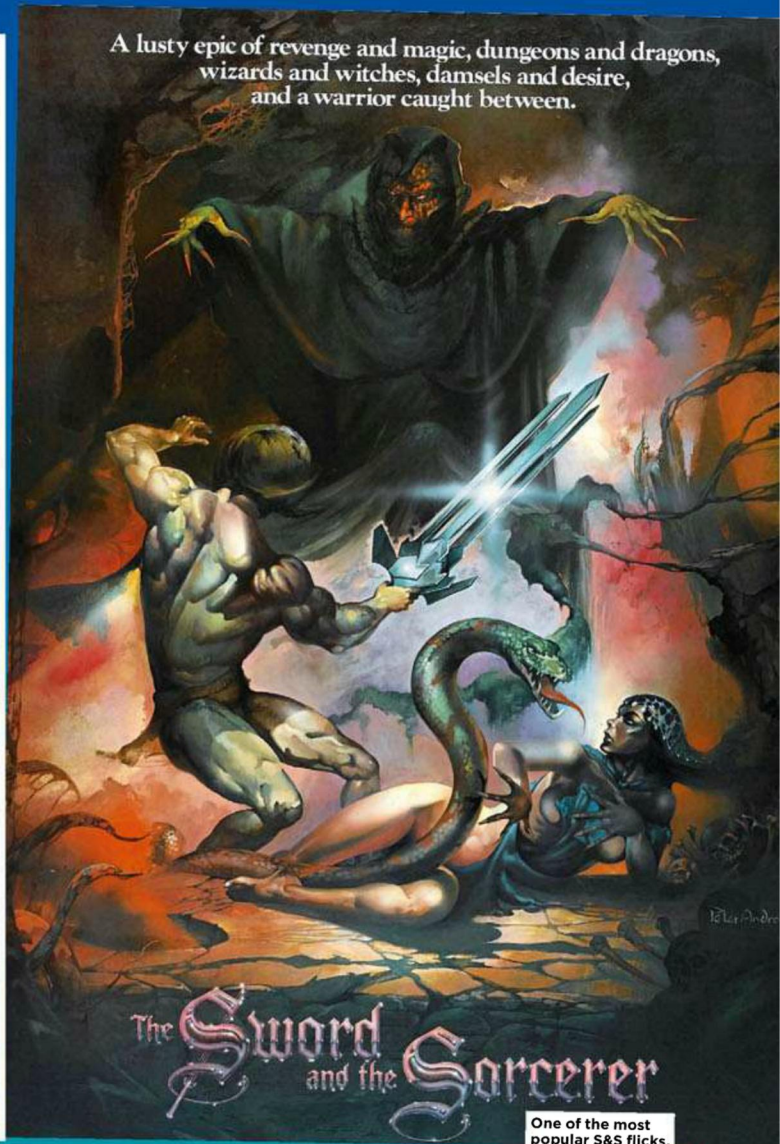
starring a barely-comprehensible Arnold Schwarzenegger (who, interestingly, had essayed another peplum-personality back in 1969's *Hercules In New York*). It needn't matter that this slapdash slice of sanguine-spillage, based on the pulp writings of Robert E Howard, was a merely risible romp – with an eye-opening quote which paraphrased Friedrich Nietzsche – what *did* count is that Conan offered some amazing effects, a speedy pace and body fascism galore.

Written and directed by arch-Hollywood conservative John Milius, *Conan* was a mindless celebration of brute force – with Arnie slicing and dicing his way through madness in a mystical kingdom while James Earl Jones and Max Von Sydow implemented something approaching thespian skills in the supporting roles. Yet audiences responded to the beautiful

bodies on display (actress Sandahl Bergman offers the female skin, although Schwarzenegger clearly has the bigger chest) and *Conan* was a box-office hit – setting off a series of cash-ins which were more “sex and sorcery” than “sword and sorcery”...

BEAUTIES AND BEASTS

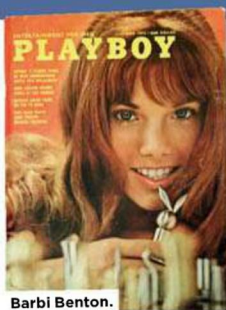
“I still haven’t seen the *Conan* movies,” admits producer Don Borchers – who worked on 1982’s *The Beastmaster*. “But just as we did *The Beastmaster* there was a producer named Brandon Chase who was making a film called *The Sword and The Sorcerer* – which was a huge money-maker. I knew that his foreign pre-sales were greater than normal expectations – and that was because the public was interested in these movies.”



So it was, then, that Borchers (who later produced such horror favourites as *Children Of The Corn* and *Vamp*), ended up onboard *The Beastmaster* – a project that had been developed by *Phantasm* filmmaker Don Coscarelli. Released after the more adult-orientated carnage of *Conan*, *The Beastmaster* is a brainless and painless outing in which Marc Singer (later to find small-screen fame in *V*) and future Bond girl Tanya Roberts, along with a cast of animals, fight against fanaticism in the medieval era. Cheesy and cheerful, the film never quite fetched in the figures of *Conan* but, with Singer and Roberts showing their tremendous torsos throughout (and the unexplainably perverse scenario of having them play shag-happy cousins), coupled with impressive aesthetics and sublime sets, it endures to this day as a cult classic.

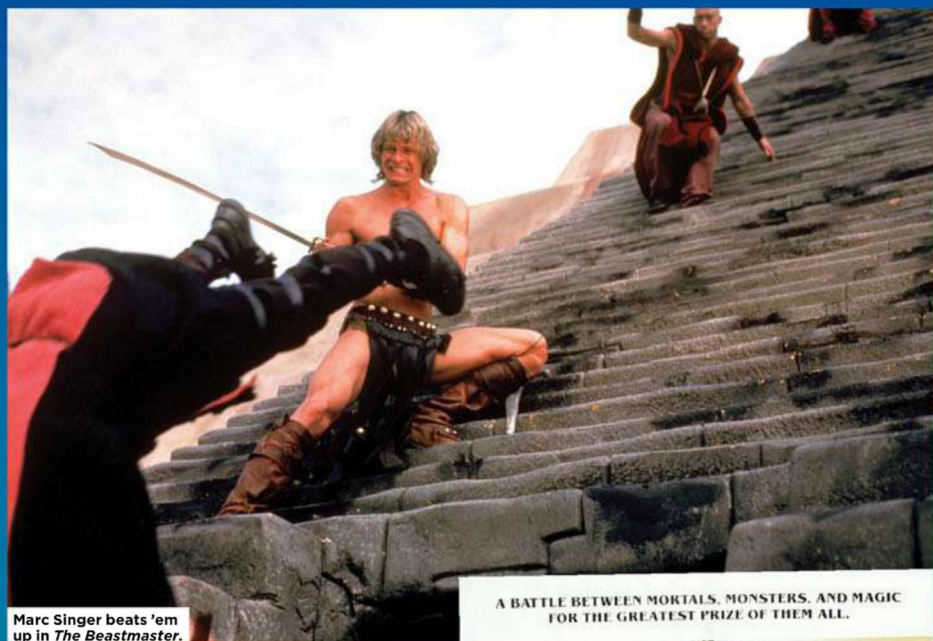
MY ANGEL WAS A CENTREFOLD

At least one thing every S&S instalment celebrates is physical perfection – and while the masculine masterworks of Marc Singer and Arnie have never been in doubt what can we say about the various femmes who populate these pieces? Well, the first thing is that many of them are no strangers to showing some skin – including *Sorceress*’s Leigh and Lynette Harris (nude in *Playboy* in 1978 and 1981) and *The Beastmaster*’s Tanya Roberts (*Playboy* cover girl for October 1982 and, to tie-in the movie, appearing awkwardly – sans clothing – with a stuffed lion). Other kit-shedding starlets include *Deathstalker* damsel Barbi Benton (Hugh Hefner’s ex



and numerous-time *Playboy*-poser), *Deathstalker II*’s Monique Gabrielle (*Penthouse*, December 1982), *Hercules*’ Sybil Danning (*Playboy*, August 1983) and Brigitte Nielsen (*Playboy*, December 1987). Nice.





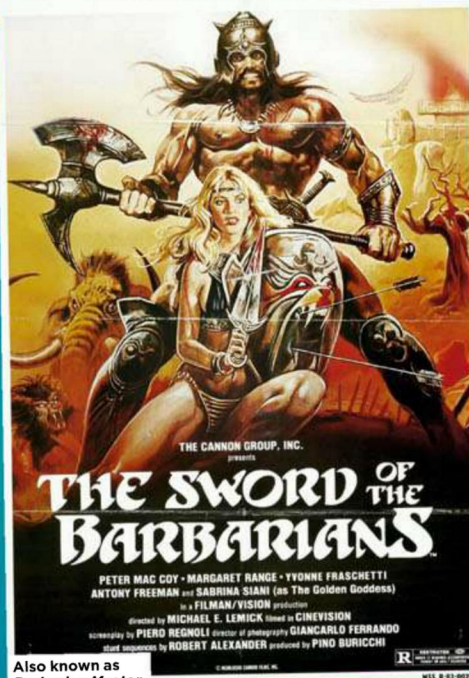
Marc Singer beats 'em up in *The Beastmaster*.



The very literally named *The Sword And The Sorcerer*.

"I think that the enormous and continual success of the movie has everything to do with the cast of animals," continues Borchers. "I have always thought of *The Beastmaster* as a Tarzan reboot – but placed within the sword and sorcery genre. I was hired on the film with only three weeks of prep. The great cinematographer John Alcott, who had photographed *2001* and *The Shining*, told me that we'd never make the schedule because he hadn't been given a list of shots. Now this information is requisite for a cameraman to light a set. So I met with Don Coscarelli and discussed this. He explained that with his previous films he would rent the cameras for one day, pick them up on a Friday morning – because back then, most rental shops were closed on weekends – shoot Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday and then return the equipment on Monday, thus paying only one day. Then on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday he would edit what he had shot, make a list of what he thought he still needed and then repeat the effort the next weekend, and the next and the next and the next until the scenes finally cut together. I recall remarking how that would take a really, really long time and I recall Coscarelli saying that, yes, it took him almost a year to

A BATTLE BETWEEN MORTALS, MONSTERS, AND MAGIC FOR THE GREATEST PRIZE OF THEM ALL.



Also known as *Barbarian Master*.

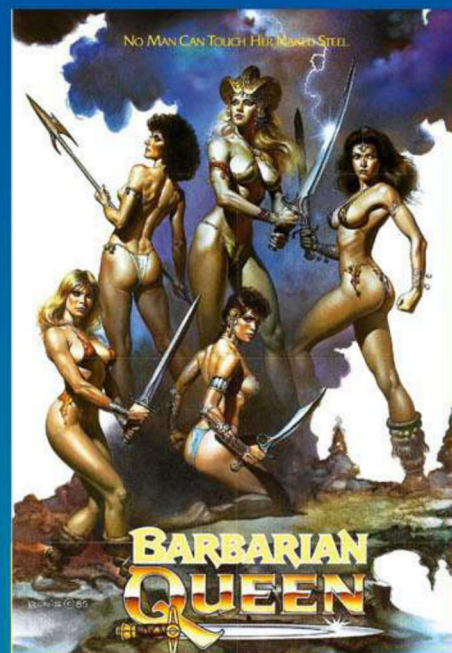
make *Phantasm*. So we had to sort this out! *The Beastmaster* was not a low budget film. It cost in the range of \$6 million to make – and that was in 1982 money."

Borchers also relates a behind-the-scenes story of star Marc Singer and some of the further challenges that Coscarelli experienced in jumping from the more easygoing routines of the indie world to the demands of a studio picture...

"Marc Singer deserved better from the production," relates the producer. "I remember one day Coscarelli yelled 'cut' on a scene that was being filmed around a little island. Then he got in the only boat that was available and went back to the shore for lunch, leaving Marc to come out of the water, wet, with no towels or blankets and shivering cold. When Marc finally got back to shore, the director already had his food tray. Marc charged him, like a bull, and got a few licks in. When I heard the story, I sided

"When Marc got back to shore, shivering cold, the director had his food tray. Marc charged him like a bull"

SWORD AND SORCERY



THE QUEEN IS DEAD

Among the most bizarre stories related to the sword and sorcery genre is surely the death of Lana Clarkson, the title star of *Barbarian Queen* (1985) and *Barbarian Queen II: The Empress Strikes Back* (1990). A consummate B-movie babe, Clarkson was shot in the head at the mansion of maverick music-producer Phil Spector on 3 February 2003. The case reached worldwide headlines and, in 2009, Spector was sentenced to 19 years in prison for her death. And for more scandal take the 1989 case of *Sorceress* stars Leigh and Lynette Harris, who were found guilty of failing to register \$1 million of income which was given to them for providing sexual favours, over a four-year period, to an 85-year-old millionaire (who eventually passed away aged 89). But no sorcery skills could save the ladies from the law: both girls served prison stints and received sizeable fines.

with Marc – I thought he was a great guy to work with."

On-set squabbles aside, *The Beastmaster* would go on to inspire two sequels and a TV series, further cementing its reputation as a notable flick. Certainly, with the theatrical roar of the Coscarelli classic, the clobbering power of *Conan* and the surprise sleeper success of *The Sword And The Sorcerer*, 1982 became arguably the genre's most memorable annum.

So much so that B-cinema's most prevalent personality, a certain Roger Corman, got busy with the sudden boom in breasts and biceps...

"Two of my collaborators on *The Beastmaster*, Frank Isaac – the assistant producer – and James Sbardellati – the assistant director – went down to Argentina and produced some movies for Corman," relates Coscarelli. "That was how you got *Barbarian Queen* and *Deathstalker*. To be honest, I thought they were a lot of fun and if *The Beastmaster* helped to inspire them then that's fine with me."

KING OF EXPLOITATION

Ultimately, the scene was now set for what viewers could expect from a sword and sorcery film: evocative, comic book poster-art, some leggy ladies, brutal battles and steroid-fuelled



male physiques. Corman's first attempt at striking gold, however, was with an altogether more ambitious oddity: 1982's *Sorceress*.

"Roger Corman came to me about making a fairly big looking picture with a lot of great special effects," states Jack Hill, the director of *Sorceress*. "I was led to believe that Roger was going to spend the money to do a first-rate film. Unfortunately, by the time the picture was finished, his business was doing very badly – mainly because it was at the end of the drive-in era and the beginning of home video – and he simply declined to spend the money to finish the picture properly. He re-cut it, left out sound effects and spliced in music from earlier films instead of scoring it properly. He also had some office employees dub in the dialogue. In the end, nothing made any sense on *Sorceress* and I took my name off it. But it turned out to be very profitable for Roger – so go figure."

Unfortunately for Hill, who more or less invented the female action picture with *Coffy* in 1973, *Sorceress* was a mystical mess. Made as a clumsy attempt to mix *Conan* and comedy, this particular hokum highlighted two real-life female twins (who seem to have been cast for their talent for exposing their bosoms) animal cohorts, ancient witchcraft, a dash of bestial sexuality and – get this – even a zombie showdown. Alas, despite this "anything *and* the kitchen sink" approach, *Sorceress* feels slapdash

Schwarzenegger and Bergman
kitted out for *Conan The Barbarian*.



and cash-starved – with Mexican performers badly looped into English and none of Hill's usual professionalism.

Nonetheless, this stir-fry of sex and swordfights kept Corman in the green when it hit cinemas at the height of *Conan*-mania, although it would be with his *Deathstalker* series that the producer tapped into the future for the genre: less money, more female flesh and aimed predominantly at the video market. Oh sure, a few major theatrical titles were still unleashed – including 1983's family-orientated flop *Krull*, the animated epic *Fire And Ice* (also '83) and the underperforming follow-up *Conan The Destroyer* (1984), but the genre was now a VHS-hotbed.

And at least part of the reason for this was the return to the forefront of our old friends the fun-lovin' Italians...

"*Conan* was a huge hit in Italy," enthuses Ruggero Deodato, the director of 1987's pleausurably preposterous *The Barbarians*, a Cannon Films co-production with Rome. "By the time I did *The Barbarians*, which was a film which did not take itself seriously and was a lot of fun to make, there were producers in Italy who had obtained a small fortune on these sword and sorcery movies."

Dominating the shelves of rental shops across the planet, the Italians unleashed a series of slender-budgeted, but all-action, outings which dressed themselves up as legitimate Hollywood productions. This was, largely, thanks to some ace cover imagery, the occasionally recognisable name (*The Barbarians* featured B-movie stalwarts Michael Berryman and Richard Lynch) and taglines like "In a place beyond time comes a terrifying challenge beyond imagination" (1983's Lucio Fulci-directed *Conquest*). That said, such era-defining drudge as *Ator The Invincible*

(1982), the Lou Ferrigno-starring *Hercules* (1983), *Hearts And Armour* (1983), *Ironmaster* (1983) and *The Blade Master* (1984) were all influential in their own way – indicating that sword and sorcery need not depend on an A-list bankroll in order to reap a return.

GIRL POWER

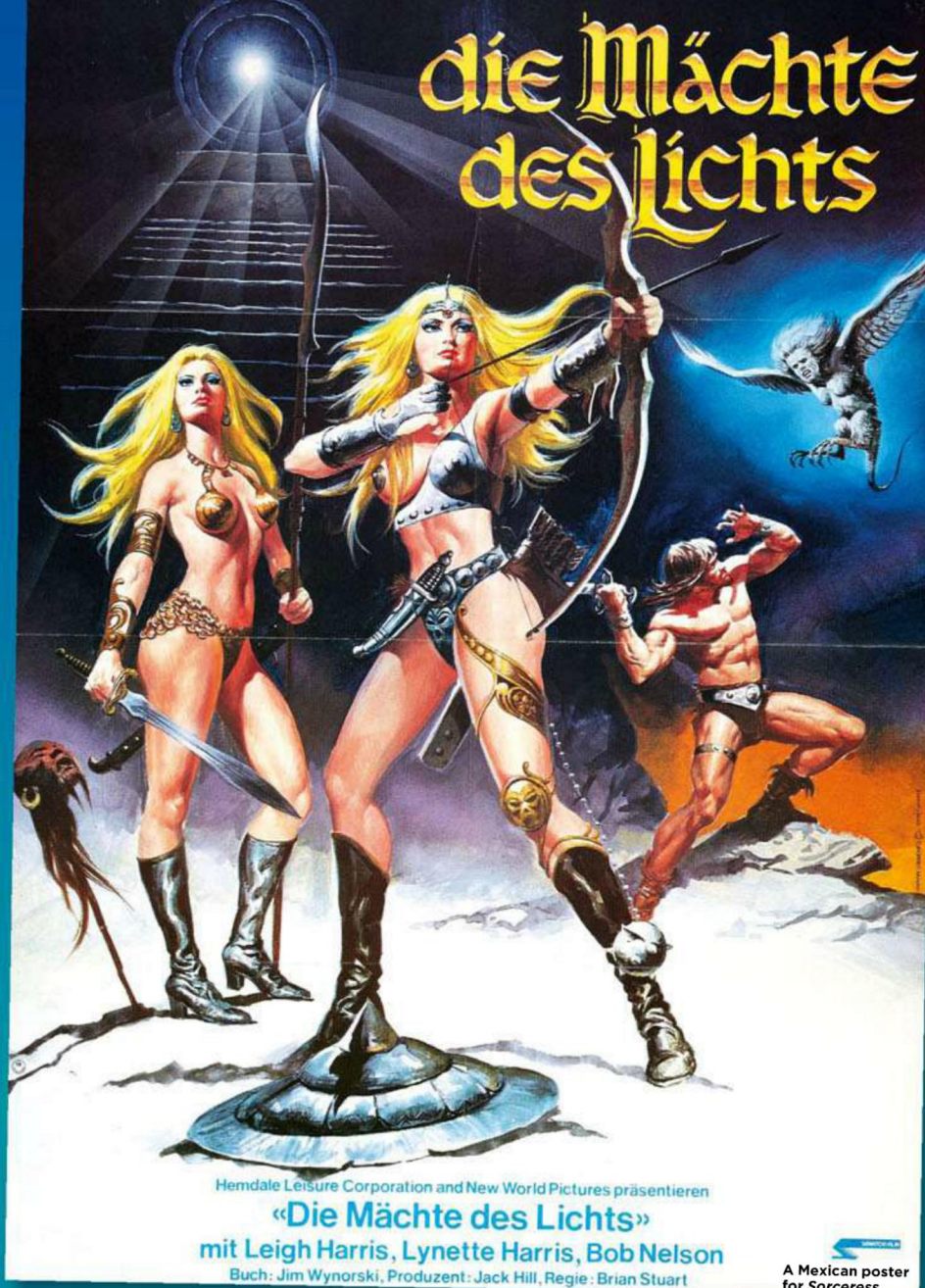
Yet, even in the middle of all of this made-for-video malarkey, a few gems could still be found. Take, for instance, the move away from hunky heroics to fully-fledged girl-power with 1983's *Hundra* – an often-hilarious genre effort in which celibate swashbuckler Laurene Landon takes out a swath of chauvinist slime in an ancient kingdom.

"I felt that *Hundra* was light-hearted but with a strong message," says the movie's director, Matt Cimber (who was also famous for marrying Hollywood icon Jayne Mansfield). "Every scene was written as a metaphor for the relationship between men and women over the centuries. But, even if you don't take the social commentary onboard, it's still really entertaining – with plenty of action and a sexy leading lady who gets to slay a lot of guys [laughs]. But *Hundra*, and my other film in this genre, *Yellow Hair And The Fortress Of Gold*, were less inspired by *Conan* than they were by the Saturday morning serials which I watched, and loved, as a kid."

Moreover, *Hundra*'s decision to replace testosterone with oestrogen predated 1985's better-known *Red Sonja* – a late in the day lapse-of-judgement for Arnold Schwarzenegger who was paired-up with Danish dame Brigitte Nielsen. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the twin-tower of incapable acting exalted by both stars, and their lack of onscreen chemistry, the film failed to muster much money at theatres

"Roger re-cut it and spliced in music from earlier films. He also had some office employees dub in the dialogue"

die Mächte des Lichts



Words: Russell Lewin

Tanya Roberts in The Beastmaster

For British males of a certain age, there was one very special moment in all of these movies, one that is indelibly imprinted on their mind's eye: Tanya Roberts half-naked in the water in *The Beastmaster*.

The PG had just been introduced in Britain, and was a more liberal certificate than it is now, ensuring youngsters throughout the land could see the lovely ex-Charlie's Angel in the altogether. But it wasn't just the moment when the comely Tanya bared her breasts in her first scene that was excitedly whispered about in the back of mum's car taking you and your mate to school, it was what she wore during the rest of the movie – or what she *didn't* wear: there are whole discussion threads on IMDb where men discuss whether Miss Roberts was wearing *anything* underneath her leather skirt.

Alright, she probably was wearing a thong. One other thing, though: whatever happened to her also topless mate she was bathing with? We never saw *her* again in the movie.



Thanks for the mammaries, Tanya.

and is likely only remembered for Nielsen's flesh-flaunting outfit. However, as Corman's *Deathstalker* series (reaching four films in total) weighed-down the shelves of Blockbuster – and the Italians continued to churn out the occasional inexpensive excursion – major genre jaunts looked increasingly unlikely... at least until a trio of tenacious titles attempted to take sword and sorcery to a new level of lunacy.

Up first was *The Black Cauldron*: Disney's animated opus which had been years in the works and so troubled that future Dreamworks honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg (then just employed as the Mouse House's studio chairman) enforced a radical re-cut of what he believed to be a dark and dingy disaster. Alas it did not work and *The Dark Cauldron* – the first Disney cartoon to garner a PG rating – was a sketch below the studio's usual cash-cultivating classics, despised by audiences even if, in retrospect, the feature is both ambitious and exciting. Following in *The Dark Cauldron's* wake were the estimable Cannon Films with 1987's *Masters Of The Universe* – a lame-brained attempt to make He-Man an icon of the big screen but, in reality, nothing more than one gigantic financial-haemorrhage. Finally, there was George Lucas who, with 1988's *Willow*, hoped that sword and sorcery would once again hit the big time...

"We had a huge press tour and a big push at Cannes but, unfortunately, *Willow* was not the

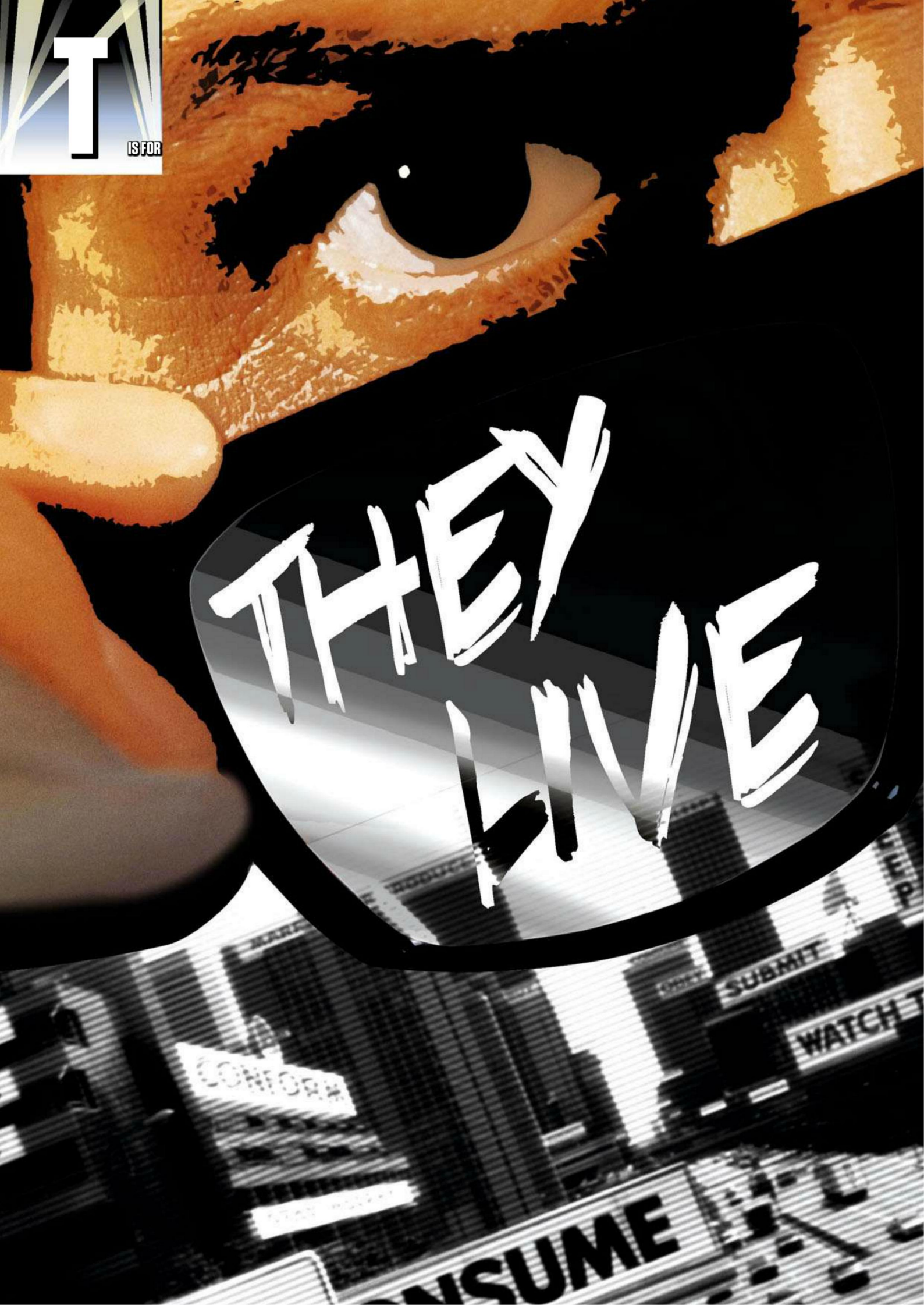
success that George was hoping for," admits star Warwick Davis, who appeared opposite Val Kilmer in the feel-good fable. "But over the years the popularity of *Willow* has increased. It seems to be one of those films which is passed down to children and, if you will pardon the cliché, has become quite timeless. It's a film which a lot of people have now grown up with."

Nevertheless, *Willow* was – arguably – the last great gasp of the genre: diluted of sex and splatter, this was an attempt to reinvigorate the form for the most fathomable audience possible. Following the Lucas experiment, and the disasters of *The Dark Cauldron*, *Masters Of The Universe* and *Red Sonja*, video and television were to be the fixture for future films and franchises – from 1991's *Beastmaster II: Through The Portal Of Time* and the same year's *Deathstalker IV* to 1997's *Kull The Conqueror* and the small-screen *Xena* and *Hercules* series. Yet all was not entirely lost – and, as the new decade dawned, at least a part-resurrection was abridged with *The Scorpion King* (2002) and Uwe Boll's would-be blockbuster *In The Name Of The King: A Dungeon Siege Tale* (2006). Quality-wise, sword and sorcery fans were likely more pleased by 2009's *Solomon Kane* and 2010's British-made horror-hybrid *Black Death* – although the true harbinger of hamstrings and heroics was surely the terrible twosome of *Clash Of The Titans* and *Conan*. Indeed, despite

disastrous critical dominations, both films (and the even more recent *Wrath Of The Titans*) indicate that sword and sorcery continues to weave a spell over Hollywood.

"I don't think any genre ever fizzles out," states Borchers. "Everything comes back around again. I just think that there's usually a dearth of well written, well directed and well produced films in Hollywood."

And with a *Red Sonja* remake on the horizons, a new *He-Man* movie on the drawing board and even Hercules suspected to flex a big-screen bicep or two in the near future it's clear that peplum never really died. It just went a little paunchy around the mid-section for a while. ☹️



THEY
LIVE



Now you see it...



Now you see it more, courtesy of special specs.



Ronnie: hero or villain?

Two sides to every story? Our writer may be right about Ronald Reagan – or he may be wrong – but in the interest of balance we thought we'd present this extract from the book *The Presidents Of The United States Of America*, by Michael Beschloss and Hugh Sidey. Here at SFX we remain strictly politically neutral, so we leave it to you, dear readers, to make your mind up about the 40th President of the USA...

"Dealing skillfully with Congress, Reagan obtained legislation to stimulate growth, curb inflation, increase employment, and strengthen national defense.

In 1986 Reagan obtained an overhaul of the income tax code, which eliminated many deductions and exempted millions of people with low incomes. At the end of his administration, the nation was enjoying its longest recorded period of peacetime prosperity without recession.

Overall, the Reagan years saw a restoration of prosperity, and the goal of peace through strength seemed to be within grasp."



WWE wrestler Roddy Piper played Nada.

If you thought the recent Obama vs Romney campaign was exhausting to endure – and indicated a United States which is ideologically split down the middle – then take heed: back in the 1980s there was Ronald Reagan. From shrinking the role of government, and thus eradicating what little welfare state America had in the first place (causing a nationwide homeless problem that continues to this day), to allowing millionaires a tax cut from 70% to 28%, Reagan was not on the side of the "little guy" and never pretended to be. For him the

people on the street were there through "their own choice" (yes, he actually said that) and his entire monetary plan – the reason the western world has currently sunk into recession – permitted bankers and corporations to dictate the highs and lows of a country's economy. Thus, consumerism was what kept shares high and money flowing – so people had to buy at an alarming rate and sellers had to be aggressive with how they marketed their wares: from houses to cars and from fads to fabric. Never mind that this was obviously a

policy for disaster (money without morals, so to speak), it was also ripe for satire, and when John Carpenter made *They Live* in 1988 he was clearly paying attention to the world around him. After all, people voted in Reagan twice; perhaps blinded by the wealth of having things to consume and his appealing charisma, but what – wondered Carpenter – was going to come of all this naive buying and selling?

Consequently, *They Live* remains of one sci-fi's most essential and gripping 90 minutes: an example of the genre aptly critiquing its immediate surroundings and, in the process, anticipating the future...

"Those years in America, and all over the planet, were kind of topsy-turvy," begins Meg Foster, the leading lady of *They Live*. "It was the Aids generation, genocide was still happening abroad and our own government was involved in policies that were detrimental to others. I think the higher-ups were not being held to answer for a lot of things and that's how our movie came about. All of the satire was prevalent in the script."

"I think the higher-ups were not being held to answer for a lot of things and that's how our movie came about"



Better than X-ray vision?

DONNING THE SHADES

In *They Live* a homeless drifter, who is symbolically named Nada (essayed by WWE wrestling icon "Rowdy" Roddy Piper), gains some manual building work at a construction site. There he meets another back-breaking labourer called Frank (played by Keith David – also from Carpenter's *The Thing*) and the two notch up a close friendship. Nada's life changes, however, when he discovers a pair of sunglasses which, when worn, reveal that numerous human beings are in fact alien life forms. Here, *They Live*'s central allegory comes to the forefront – that those in a position of wealth and rule are actually from another planet.



That's a real ESP book in the background.



Alluring advertising...



...for a life of domesticity.



Meaningful graffiti shocker.



Meg Foster took the part of Holly.



Would Ronnie Reagan have looked like this?

Shocked and dismayed, Nada attempts to broadcast his finding to the world via a disbelieving cable news station director (played by Foster) and, after some friction, seemingly wins her over to his cause. But how do you convince an entire nation that it is being run by extraterrestrial evil?

"When I was given the script to read I immediately connected with the political undertones and I understood exactly what John was trying to do," continues Foster. "And I also loved the characters in the movie. Look at it this way: Roddy Piper plays a homeless man who has a smile on his face. Now how is that for going against the times? He is a real working class hero. We know so little about Nada – he

struggles but he is honourable – and that is the most important thing about him: this is a guy who knows how to tell the truth. He cannot do anything else – he is an honest man. And Keith David plays another honest man. No matter how much it damages them personally they refuse to live with this secret – these are two men who just cannot sit idly by and let this takeover happen."

Politically, though, *They Live* was a game-changing career U-turn for John Carpenter. His films, which had largely been seen as enjoyable escapism, rarely channelled any particular social thought – excepting the possible Cold War mediation of *The Thing* and the rogue individualism of *Escape From New York*. Moreover, Carpenter's main onscreen muse had

been Kurt Russell, one of Hollywood's most famous conservatives and a gun toting' libertarian. Given such an association, it was improbable to imagine Carpenter writing and producing something as distinctly left-wing as *They Live* (in later interviews the filmmaker would deny that his opus was in any way intended as a Marxist tract).

"I think as a director John has always been ahead of the game – but maybe that's also because he doesn't play any games," laughs Foster. "He makes most of his films his way. For instance, he began his career in the independent film world and that allowed him to keep his vision intact and to bring that to the studio world as he got more successful. *They Live* was his own script, his own music and his own outlook."

"I think John has always been ahead of the game – but maybe that's also because he doesn't play any games"

UPS AND DOWNS

Certainly, *They Live* came at a difficult time for its director. Carpenter had been working within the studio realm for years – and it had provided him with both artistic success (such as *The Thing* and 1984's Oscar-nominated *Starman*) and also significant financial failure (*Big Trouble In Little*

A CARPENTER'S TALE

Following the blockbuster success of *Halloween* in 1978, and 1979's critically acclaimed television biography *Elvis*, John Carpenter went on to experience a period of colossal creativity. 1980's *The Fog* cemented his reputation as a terror auteur while 1981's *Escape From New York* endures to this day. Although it was a flop when it first came out, 1982's *The Thing* is now seen as among his greatest achievements and 1983's *Christine* is one of the best Stephen King adaptations. Oscar glory did not seem out of the question with 1984's *Starman* (unfortunately only actor Jeff Bridges received a nomination) but 1986's now-classic *Big Trouble In Little China* was a box office bomb. Following this,



Carpenter faltered: 1987's *Prince Of Darkness* is widely seen as a misfire and *They Live* represents his last "great" movie – followed by such disappointments as *Memoirs Of An Invisible Man* (1992), *Vampires* (1998) and *Ghosts Of Mars* (2001). Now in semi-retirement, Carpenter returned with *The Ward* in 2010 but it was, alas, a scare-less snore-fest.



The scrap that lasts nearly six minutes!



The Magic Piper

Despite claiming to be from "Glasgow, Scotland", wrestler-turned-actor "Rowdy" Roddy Piper is actually Canadian and has never so much as even attempted a northern dialect in his long and illustrious ring career. During the 1980s, Piper was second only to Hulk Hogan insofar as grappling fame went – and his stint of living homeless, prior to his rise to the top, made Nada in *They Live* an especially personal role for him. Unfortunately, following *They Live*, Piper never capitalised on his big-screen fame. Following a botched music career (his single "I'm Your Man" should never be heard by anyone, ever) he appeared alongside Japanese kung-fu icon Sonny Chiba in the direct-to-video schlock-fest *Immortal Combat*. Indeed, during the '90s Piper's rash of quickly churned out action oddities at least kept VHS shelves groaning under their weight. Nowadays we suspect he is awaiting a call from the producers of *The Expendables III*...

China tanked upon its 1986 release). Due to a subsequent drop in his "star value", Universal opted to provide Carpenter with a lower budget than he was typically used to working with at this point in his career. For quick comparison – *They Live* obtained funding of just \$3 million in comparison to *Big Trouble*'s \$20 million.

Given such limitations, it's hardly surprising that the director settled for an unproven star in the leading role...

"Roddy Piper was, and still is, the salt of the earth," enthuses Foster. "He is a wonderful, underrated performer and one of the finest human beings I've ever met. He is a kind man with no pretensions – the person in front of him at each moment is the most important person in the world. He is a heartbreaker too – just a great looking guy with a fantastic body [laughs]."

As a prominent WWE grappling guru, Piper was no stranger to turning in a thespian performance – but, outside of staged slug-fests, his cinematic appeal was minimal. Prior to *They Live* he had achieved only one major credit – the leading role in the direct-to-video fantasy favourite *Hell Comes To Frogtown*. With *They*

Live, the actor would be propelled into a movie which cemented his cult appeal for good, while his token line, "I've come here to chew bubblegum and kick ass – and I'm all out of bubblegum", is arguably the most iconic in Carpenter's entire oeuvre.

"I laughed out loud when I first heard him deliver that line," smiles Foster. "I think the other thing people tend to rave about is the fight sequence. John wanted to direct the greatest and longest fist fight in cinema history and you have to give him credit because that is exactly what he did [laughs]."

The scene in question runs for almost six minutes and is unashamedly entertaining to watch. The battle erupts when Piper attempts to place the alien-revealing sunglasses on the face of Keith David – who, suspecting some kind of peer control, reacts violently in opposition...

"You know, it is also quite a lonely scene," says Foster. "I saw *They Live* again not so long ago and I came to that conclusion. It's this fight where these two loners are beating the hell out of each other and no one cares, no else is even there. They are totally alone and yet they have

the key to change the planet. Roddy wants to prove to this guy what is happening all around him because he knows he will care – but Keith just refuses to budge: at least initially he doesn't want anyone telling him how to think. I guess *They Live* is a film which celebrates the individual. The little guy is the one who finally prevails in the story and I think that's the underlying message of the film. It is about the underdog getting one up on the establishment."

TOP OF THE TREE

Fittingly, then, *They Live* would catch the wind of the times – opening at the top of the US box office, and remaining the country's top draw for three consecutive weeks. In addition, the politically-potent pot-boiler would also re-establish Carpenter's waning commercial reputation. In an ironic twist, the film which *They Live* supplanted as the top grossing title in America was none other than *Halloween 4* – the slasher-sequel which Carpenter had bailed on to make this more personal picture.

"The film is called *They Live* and I suppose it does live," chuckles Foster. "I think the title has become very metaphorical in that sense. I recall that when we came out the film got some good press and it did well but since then it has built up the biggest following of anything I've ever been a part of. Now it is its own thing entirely. Truthfully, it was the most comfortable set I have ever worked on. John Carpenter was very gentle with everyone – including his actors. We all had such a great time making *They Live*. When it opened at number one I think each of us felt that our hard work had paid off because now a large audience was seeing this tremendously honest satire and, hopefully, responding to it in the way that we hoped."

Unfortunately, though, Carpenter's hope of changing America did not quite reach the next election. Four days after *They Live* made its debut the country plumped for arch-conservative George Bush as its next President. And the rest, as they say, is history... ☹

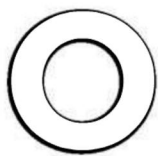


Keith David plays convert Frank.

UNCLE WALT

One of cinema's most celebrated visionaries became a byword for conservatism, corporatism and cultural-colonialism. However, the real Walt Disney – and his various accomplishments – are far more complex...

WORDS: CALUM WADDELL



On 5 December 1901, a man who would go on to become one of the most important figures of the 20th century was born. Named Walter Elias Disney, the child was raised under the firm hand

of his working class, Congregationalist father, Elias, and the more distanced supervision of his mother, Flora. He was the fourth son (a fifth and final Disney sprog, Ruth, would be born in 1903) and his childhood would shape his later aspirations – especially when Elias moved to the sleepy, but progressive, town of Marceline, Missouri, in 1906 to scrape a living as a farmer. In Marceline, the young Disney would dream of escaping on one of the trains which rumbled through the area, and his attachment to the farm's animals would later influence the anthropomorphism and anarchic barnyard humour of his earliest cartoons. Indeed, if one wishes to see Disney's idealised vision of his early years then seek out his overlooked, and underrated, feature *So Dear To My Heart* (1948). The film is primarily live action and casts the late child star Bobby Driscoll as an impossibly cute farmhand who enters his scrappy pet sheep into a local county fair, which everyone thinks he is destined to lose.

In truth, though, these early years were far from frivolous for Disney. For a start, his father would overwork and beat him. When, at age nine, Walt was uprooted to Kansas, he was forbidden from earning money – even from his gruelling early morning paper route which prohibited the exhausted boy from staying focused in the classroom – and creature comforts were few and far between.

Interestingly, given Disney's later political leanings, his father was a hardened socialist: an enthusiast of workers' unions and an outspoken supporter of the Democratic party. Walt even stumbled into trouble when he brought to school some tracings of left-wing political cartoons which he had obtained from an issue of the socialist-sympathising *Appeal To Reason* magazine.

However, the Walt Disney that has become the man of legend largely began to form after the First World War. Raised as a staunch patriot, Disney attempted to serve in the Navy but was rejected for his youth (he was just 16 at the time). Instead, Walt was sectioned to France as part of the Red Cross, where he made some personal pennies from sketching caricatures of whoever could afford to pay him. Returning to Kansas, Disney hoped to gain work as a newspaper cartoonist but eventually kick-started his own small, but unsuccessful, animation business with a shy, but enormously creative, gentleman named Ub Iwerks. When Disney and Iwerks were forced to claim bankruptcy, Walt – at the age of 21 – opted to join his older brother Roy in Los Angeles. His essential muse, Iwerks, followed only a year later.

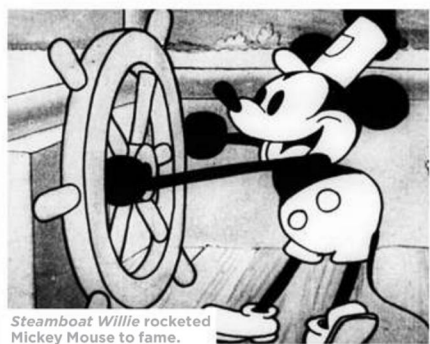


The undervalued *So Dear To My Heart*.

The Disney brothers and Iwerks were focused on their "Alice Comedies" – which mixed live action and animation and starred the unknown child-actress Virginia Davis. Seen today, these minimally-funded, monochrome shorts are crude but give tantalising hints of a playful imagination that would develop into the creation of Disney's first "star": Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Universal Studios distributed the Oswald cartoons, which creatively peaked with 1927's *Trolley Troubles*, giving Disney and Iwerks some degree of income – although not a lot. Nonetheless, Oswald at least proved popular enough to launch a small, but encouraging, line of merchandising.

Meanwhile, things were changing in Disney's personal life: he married his wife, Lillian, aged 23 and accepted, however gruffly, Roy's role as the negotiator and "businessman" of his independent operation. The two butted heads frequently, however, and – in an act of spite – the younger brother insisted on changing the company name from The Disney Brothers to The Walt Disney Studio. It was a decision which Roy agreed upon, largely because his short-tempered sibling was never easy to argue with. Then came the decision that changed the company's future: Charles Mintz at Universal, the producer of the Oswald cartoons, decided to take over the character himself and elbow the Disneys out of the picture. In addition, the New York-based Mintz convinced some of Walt's leading animators to jump ship to his studio. Distraught and penniless, Walt made sure that every subsequent creation was copyrighted to Disney.

"Keep your chin up," wrote Walt in a telegram to Roy after learning about the studio's loss of Oswald (which was netting them \$2,250 per cartoon). "We will be able to laugh last – that's the best laugh of all."



Steamboat Willie rocketed Mickey Mouse to fame.

MICKEY MOUSE

So it was, then, that upon returning to Los Angeles, Walt and Iwerks went through a number of nature magazines in the hope of finding a new animal mascot. They both settled on a mouse, whom Walt dubbed Mortimer. Of course, the name – at the behest of Walt's wife Lillian – was changed to Mickey (urban legend claims he was named after Mickey Rooney, which is untrue). However, Mickey – who was dreamed up as a cross between Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks Jr – was not an instant hit. His first cartoon, 1928's mind-bending *Plane Crazy*, single-handedly animated by über talent Iwerks in just two weeks, was unveiled to disinterested distributors. And his second stint on the big screen, *The Gallopin' Gaucho*, also failed to gain a release. But, thanks to the advent of sound technology, Disney had a "eureka" moment: Mickey would be the very first animated character to be heard. So it was, then, that with *Steamboat Willie*, unveiled in November 1928, the sound cartoon had arrived.

Booked into the Colony Theatre in New York for a two-week run, at the behest of an impressed press agent called Harry Reichenbach, *Steamboat Willie* blew away the critics and overshadowed the movie which it opened for (the Jack Pickford-starring gangster opus *Gang War*). Disney was, practically overnight, the toast of Hollywood – and everyone wanted a piece of him. His old enemy Charles Mintz even made apologetic inroads to enquire about distributing the franchise. Instead, Walt handed the reins for his latest success to a man called Pat Powers, who had developed the sound system that was used to record *Steamboat Willie*. Almost immediately further Mickey adventures were rushed into production (12 new animated outings were released in 1929, alongside a belated spin for *Plane Crazy* and *The Gallopin' Gaucho*). Furthermore, a new series of Iwerks-crafted shorts – entitled Silly Symphonies – made their debut with the immortal classic *The Skeleton Dance*, the finest Disney achievement yet and an indication of the artistic heights that were still to come. Yet, amazingly, even despite a nationwide Mickey Mouse Club and merchandising galore, both Roy and Walt remained cash-strapped.

Roy suspected that Powers, whom he dubbed "a crook", had been siphoning cash from the Disney coffers ever since *Steamboat Willie* and his fears were all but confirmed when the distributor refused to serve up any kind of balance sheet to explain the paltry payments. Ironically, Walt took the side of Powers – at least until the man who had left the brothers high and dry revealed a malevolent masterstroke: he had convinced Iwerks to jump ship and set up his own studio in rivalry to Disney. Although Walt had pushed the recently-married Iwerks to



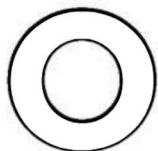


breaking point insofar as work went, and the notorious Disney temper had ostracised the exhausted animator from his social life, the boss was still dumbfounded.

Frustrated at a lack of recognition ("A Walt Disney Comic by UB Iwerks" read the early shorts), Iwerks accepted a buy-out of his stock in exchange for just \$3,000 and moved on to create such radical, but barely remembered, characters as Flip the Frog and Willie Whopper. Ironically, only a decade later, when bankruptcy beckoned, Iwerks would be back at Disney – working under a boss who rarely spoke to him. During this time, though, Iwerks developed the visual effects technology which would influence the creation of *101 Dalmatians*, various Disneyland attractions, cinemascope animation, *Mary Poppins* and many, many more. He would also obtain two Academy Awards – and his technical wizardry attracted the attention of Alfred Hitchcock, who put the screen trickery of *The Birds* (1963) in his hands. Had he not been seduced by Powers, Iwerks' shares in the Disney studio would today be worth over \$500 million. Instead, he died, relatively unrecognised, in 1971.

However unfairly, the man who *really* introduced the world to Mickey Mouse remains ridiculously obscure.

GREATER HEIGHTS



Of course, Walt Disney never did say die. Even when, post-Powers, MGM offered to buy his entire operation, the great man held on. He initially signed with

Columbia Pictures, and then United Artists, to distribute his work, before making his "home" with RKO. The studio's first colour cartoon arrived with the breathtaking *Flowers And Trees* (1932), for which Disney won an Academy Award for Best Short Subject (that same year he was also given a special gong for the creation of Mickey Mouse). New characters were introduced with Pluto (in 1930's *The Chain Gang*), Goofy (in 1932's *Mickey's Revue*), the Three Little Pigs (in 1933's self-titled *Silly Symphony*) and Donald Duck (in 1934's *The Wise Old Hen*). Moreover, the animation department continued to expand – both in workforce and ambition.

Walt Disney, the man, however, was haunted.

In 1931, with debts spiralling, he had a nervous breakdown. Worst of all, in 1938, Disney had to live with the fact that the house he had bought for his parents in California contained a carbon monoxide leak. It killed his mother and almost his father as well. Few critics ever mediated upon the darkness of Disney's work, exemplified in the child abuse of *Pinocchio* (1940), the demonic climax of *Fantasia* (1940) and the motherless nightmares of *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942), but it would be ridiculous to ignore the binary between these terrors and the very real agony and confusion which their producer experienced.

Disney himself had not animated anything since the early Alice Comedies – although he had a fantastic eye for finding the right talent to bring his ideas to life and, perhaps most strangely, to view him in an almost fatherly reverence despite his insistence on ridiculously long hours. Over the next decade he would recruit the artistic hands who became known as his "nine old men" (Les Clark, Marc Davis, Ollie Johnston, Milt Kahl, Ward Kimball, Eric Larson, John Lounsbery, Wolfgang Reitherman, Frank Thomas). Between them, this was the group which brought to life the company's most famous creations – including the very first animated feature film, *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs*...

As unbelievable as it may now sound, *Snow White* was seen as a sure-fire failure for Disney. Consistently in debt to the Bank of America, the ambitious project was dubbed "Disney's folly" throughout the industry and its ballooning costs threatened to sink the studio. No expense was spared on the project, including the introduction of a new, three-dimensional camera entitled "the multiplane", which had been trialled on the Academy Award-winning short *The Old Mill* (1937). Adding a further, breathtaking level of cinematic realism to the painted form, this was yet another step forward in the art of animation.

Luckily for Walt, his investment paid off: *Snow White* was a huge success. Released in 1937 to rave reviews, hailed by the intelligentsia of the day and beloved by children and adults alike, *Snow White* cemented Disney as a major player in Hollywood. Despite this, he was not better off – but the filmmaker was never a money-man. He aspired for little materialism, even after the birth

of his only blood daughter, Diane, in 1933 (a later child, Sharon, who was born in 1936, was adopted: some report against the will of Walt himself). Instead, his finances went back into the studio – leading to further costly projects such as *Pinocchio*, and the ridiculously ambitious *Fantasia*, which involved the installation of an entire new sound system at choice cinemas. Alas, thanks to the outbreak of World War Two, and the depletion of the international market, these subsequent outings, despite now being seen as cinematic milestones, failed to match the grosses of *Snow White* upon their initial theatrical spins. As a result, Walt's personal investment, including more and more bank loans which frustrated his already infuriated brother, were not immediately justified. The fact that *Fantasia*, still one of the most beautiful, exhilarating and inventive films of all time, was a box office disappointment became especially galling to Walt. Never again would he invest quite so much energy into an animated project.

And then there was the studio strike.

THE ARCH-REACTIONARY

With his staff demanding unionisation and fair pay for all, Disney – who was still in a swamp of liability to the bank – had no idea how to react. As a mid-western

farm boy, with limited education but a great imagination, Walt had no understanding of why his employees would wish to have a home life, recognition on the credits of their productions or even reasonable pay and working hours (some of the females in the ink department complained about not even being able to afford lunch). Despite describing his early animation studio as representing "a kind of Jesus Christ communism" in which everyone chipped in and worked hard towards a final, phenomenal product, the 1941 strike broke this romanticised, and frankly ignorant, idealism. Led by leading animator Art Babbitt, who had created Goofy and animated the standout mushroom serenade in *Fantasia*, Disney listened to bad advice during the strike and started to assume that the Republican line on communists seeking

Disney pores over *Bambi* sketches.



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“Disney’s Nazi-sympathising tendencies have been largely formed upon two events”

to “bring down” honest labour might be true after all. The result? He preposterously fobbed some of his workers off to the FBI as underground Bolsheviks during the McCarthy witch-hunts.

Even so, Disney is an unlikely candidate as some sort of right-wing messiah. And that includes as regards race-relations.

Sure, seen today such cartoons as *The Three Little Pigs*, with its sequence in which the Big Bad Wolf dresses up as a Jewish peddler, *Fantasia* with its (now censored) slave-centaurs and *Song Of The South* (1946), which features a Georgian plantation worker – “Uncle Remus” – who happily kowtows to white authority, appear insensitive and offensive. Context, in this respect, is everything and, in an era of the black stereotypes of *Gone With The Wind* (1939), and the racial idiocy of *The Amos 'n Andy Show*, Disney’s work is not unique in its ethnic blundering. Certainly, cartoons at the time were frequently racially naive – from the bumbling African-American maid of the Tom and Jerry shorts to the Warner Bros cartoon *Southern Fried Rabbit* (1953) where Bugs Bunny pretends to be a black slave.

Meanwhile, Disney’s Nazi-sympathising tendencies have been largely formed upon two events. The first is his ill-thought-out agreement to meet Hitler’s propagandist filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl when she visited Hollywood in 1938. Disney acknowledged to Riefenstahl, who was turned away by most of the show business elite, that he shouldn’t be doing so – but nonetheless expressed an interest in seeing her acclaimed documentary *Olympia*, about the Berlin Games. This may indicate that he was predominantly drawn to her acclaim as a skilled technician, and her unique standing as a prominent female director, rather than her personal politics. Certainly, Disney was not alone in hosting

Riefenstahl: Louis B Mayer also welcomed her to Los Angeles and, in retrospect, critics have forthrightly hailed her accomplishments behind the camera. Yet, none of this should be taken lightly, including contemporaneous applause for what amounts to a National Socialist that, regardless of talent, assisted in the propaganda of Hitler and his regime while millions were executed. Disney should have known better.

The second rumour of Disney’s far-right sympathies comes in the form of a still of Donald Duck wearing a Nazi uniform. This snapshot is actually from the 1942 cartoon *Der Fuehrer’s Face* which, after the end of World War Two, was pulled from release and archived. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941, the Disney studio was contracted by the US treasury to make films which would strengthen support for the war effort and also educate the public. *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, in which Donald Duck awakes to find himself in a totalitarian Nazi society, is one such instance – as was the documentary *Victory Through Air Power*, based on the book by Alexander P de Seversky, which Walt personally financed in order to indicate that strategic bombing was the way to annihilate the enemy. Perhaps surprisingly, the film actually influenced the armed struggle – impressing even Winston Churchill and Franklin D Roosevelt.

Ultimately, if Disney was an anti-Semite it’s doubtful that he would have donated to such charities as the Hebrew Orphan Asylum of the City of New York, Yeshiva College or the Jewish Home for the Aged or have proudly accepted his award for “Man of the Year” in 1955 from the Beverly Hills branch of B’nai B’rith – the oldest Jewish service organisation in the world. More importantly, Disney employed a range of Jewish animators and filmmakers.

Even politically, the man behind Mickey Mouse was curious. He unexpectedly joined

AFTER WALT

Of course, the Disney company continued to exist after its founders passed away (Roy Disney died in 1971, shortly after the opening of Walt Disney World). Walt’s son-in-law, Ron Miller, took charge of the corporation following the passing of the Disneys, with the “idiot nephew” (as his uncle once called him) Roy E Disney in tow as an influential studio executive with a seat on the board of directors. Even though its token animated films during this period are just about worthy of the brand name – in particular *The Aristocats* (1970), *Robin Hood* (1973) and *The Rescuers* (1977), which were overseen by some of Walt’s “nine old men”, the brand was losing favour with the general public. Its live action films were generally seen as “safe” in an era in which the counterculture was increasingly prevalent. While *The Love Bug* (1968), which began life under Walt, was successful enough to launch Herbie the Volkswagen Beetle onto international fame – later titles such as *Bedknobs And Broomsticks* (1971), *Escape To Witch Mountain* (1975) and the *Star Wars*-aping *The Black Hole* (1979) crashed and burned at the box office, most deservedly so.

Miller was eventually ousted by the not-so-idiotic after all Roy E Disney due to some costly disasters. This included the EPCOT launch and more “mature” movies like the teen-comedy *Midnight Madness* (1980), the trendsetting *Tron* (1982) and the undervalued animated epic *The Black Cauldron* (1985). Yet, before his retirement from motion pictures, Miller did unveil the Touchstone brand which would enable Disney to branch into adult-orientated fare – including *Splash* (1984), *Ruthless People* (1986) and *Dead Poets Society* (1989). His successors, Michael Eisner, Jeffrey Katzenberg and Frank Wells, took the studio to the level of corporate entity – purchasing Miramax, Jim Henson Productions, launching Disneyland Paris and Disneyland Hong Kong, engaging with Pixar and unleashing a number of big-name hit films, most famously *Dick Tracy* (1990), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), *Armageddon* (1998) and *Pirates Of The Caribbean* (2003).

Eisner’s finest moment, however, was 1991’s *Beauty And The Beast* – the first animated feature to gain an Academy Award nomination for Best Picture (it lost to *The Silence Of The Lambs*) and the most accomplished Disney cartoon outing since *The Jungle Book* in 1966. The “idiot nephew” would strike again, however, and – as a major stock holder – Roy E Disney (who died in 2009) finally took out Eisner, whom he deemed “soulless”, from the top spot in 2005.

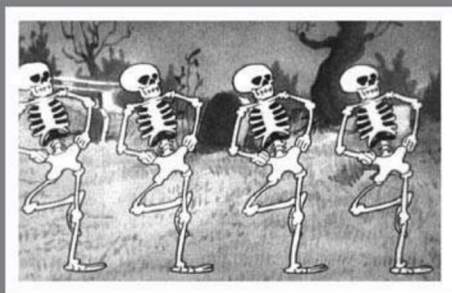
His replacement, corporate magnet Bob Iger, remains at the top to this day – and with Disney’s recent buy-out of Marvel and *Star Wars*, and a Disneyland park planned for Shanghai, it’s clear that the Mouse House is destined to go from strength to strength, even if its independent spirit largely went to the grave with its founder.

THE BEST OF UNCLE WALT

Want to become a quick-fire expert on all things Disney? Here's his 10 must-see achievements...

1) STEAMBOAT WILLIE (1928)

While the completist is strongly urged to go back to the Alice Comedies and the Oswald shorts, it's this coarse but comical Mickey Mouse short which represents the commercial arrival of Walt Disney. Animated by Ub Iwerks, with a focus on sight gags and comical farmyard animals, the film made history by being the first sound cartoon.



2) THE SKELETON DANCE (1929)

The first Silly Symphony is the greatest achievement of Disney's monochrome period. Gothic, ghoulish and illustrating a fluidity of animation that improved upon the comparative crudity of the early Mickey shorts, *The Skeleton Dance* is essential.



3) THREE LITTLE PIGS (1933)

A Depression-era favourite, this heated conflict between the Big Bad Wolf and a trio of cheery porkers led to three sequels. The three pigs themselves – lookalike sprites but with divergent personality traits – indicated the studio's tireless dedication to its storytelling.

4) THE BAND CONCERT (1935)

This cartoon bleeds with colour and life – while the plot, basically a tornado spinning a musical performance by numerous Disney favourites out of control, allows for some furious imagery.

Walt Disney and the Seven Dwarves.



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the "Night of the Americas" on 13 February 1943 – a fundraising gala sponsored by left-wing sympathisers (one rumour has it that Walt attended to report back to the FBI, something that has never been verified). And that same year, he signed a newspaper advertisement which paid tribute to the socialist artist Art Young. For the lead role of *Song Of The South* he initially chased none other than crooner Paul Robeson, an African-American apologist for Stalin's Soviet Union. Sensing that he was well over his head, and that his so-called anti-communism was driven more by vendetta against his strikers than a deep-seated ideology, Disney backed away from politics as the 1950s dawned. He hired Rapf again, to pen *So Dear To My Heart*, and – despite continuing to fund the Republican party, Walt kept his affairs private.

Either way, after the strike, Disney was exhausted.

Now no longer a favourite of the left-wing establishment, he took less of a hands-on approach to his animated classics following the release of *Bambi* – another feature which failed to reach *Snow White* levels of lucre at the box office. Live action now interested Disney more – it was cheaper and quicker to make. The success of *Song Of The South* encouraged this

exploration, despite the fact it is the film's cartoon segments, which bleed with blissful Technicolor, that are remembered as among the studio's most dazzling achievements. Disney's first live-action feature was *Treasure Island* (1950) and, despite lacking the charm of any of his cartoon work, it proved a phenomenon at the box office. Furthermore, the income generated by *Cinderella*, which was released the same year, meant that – finally – the Mouse House was no longer in debt to the Bank of America.

DISNEYLAND

So it was, then, that Walt retreated into a world of his own – chain-smoking, drinking in the evening, as grouchy as ever with his employees and now fascinated with building mock-up trains and railways at his residence in Holmby Hills, Los Angeles. His first nature documentary, *Seal Island* (1948), which Roy believed to be a massive waste of money, proved popular with audiences and won the studio another Academy Award (a drunk Walt is rumoured to have thrown it at his brother's

head). This instigated a new line of productions – “True Life Adventures” – and, suffice to say, the road to David Attenborough begins here. Thanks to the work of his leading artists, Disney’s all-important cartoon features maintained value – 1951’s *Alice In Wonderland*, which Walt disliked, is an anarchic dreamscape of colour and calamity while 1955’s stylish and vibrant *Lady And The Tramp* introduced CinemaScope to the animated film – but Walt was more interested in other things. Namely: building his own theme park which would forever freeze in time his upbringing in Marceline, Missouri.

Amazingly, thanks to the sponsorship of the ABC network – which in 1954 agreed to air a “Disneyland” television programme – this dream would become a reality and, the following year, Walt’s most enduring achievement would arrive. Disneyland gave Walt exactly what he wanted and, from his secret room inside a mock fire station on Main Street USA, the shopping block entrance to the park, the visionary would watch – with tears in his eyes – as people from all over the world experienced a throwback to innocence and nostalgia. So authentic to his turn-of-the-century idealism was Walt Disney’s dream that his park shied away from employing ethnic minorities, even in the futuristic area dubbed Tomorrowland.

But then bringing the past together with the future was something that Uncle Walt had a hard time consoling.

He was, after all, the man who maintained Christian values while *Fantasia* promoted evolution – surmising the “big bang” and “the first few billion years” of the planet. The personality whose public persona was of a conservative, homely old man but, in private, a temper to be reckoned with and someone who occasionally bemoaned not being able to make grittier, Hitchcockian-style cinema. The same person who befuddled Southern television screens by, against the wishes of some sponsors, putting Louis Armstrong on his *Disneyland* television programme. A byword for capitalism and yet a daydreamer who showed very little interest in material wealth: spending most of his life in crippling debt with his studio risking foreclosure. He has since been deemed the personification of the right-wing, despite lording over cinema which promoted animal welfare (*One Hundred And One Dalmatians*, *Dumbo*),

conservation and environmentalism (*Bambi*, his “True Life Adventures”), internationalism (*Saludos Amigos*, *The Three Caballeros*, sundry Disneyland attractions) and self-sacrifice (*Pinocchio*, *Lady And The Tramp*). And, shortly before he expired on 16 December 1966 only 10 days after his 65th birthday – a victim of lung cancer, caused by his chain-smoking – he dreamed up the future. (Incidentally, the urban legend that he was cryogenically frozen emerged as a prank by some staffers who thought it would be amusing to rip on Walt’s obsession with technology. The fact is that Walt Disney was actually cremated by his family – and his death certificate bluntly states such.) With newfound critical acclaim on the back of the Academy Award-winning *Mary Poppins* (1964) bolstering his spirits, Disney forged ahead with a second theme park in Florida which was to include something called EPCOT: Experimental Prototype City (or Community) of Tomorrow. Here, an ever-evolving city and homestead – self-sufficient and environmentally progressive with recycling and natural energy at its core – was to have existed. But after his death, Walt’s employees could make barely head nor tail of how to realise it (EPCOT now exists as an in-name-only “homage” of sorts in the Walt Disney World park, complete with a “World Showcase” of international drinks, foods and themed rides).

When Walt Disney passed away, the planet lost not only a visionary but an enigma. His death, at a relatively young age, was doubly sad because the real human being behind the grey suits and cuddly facade will probably never be known: for every confirmation about him there exists a contradiction. Yet this only makes his body of work more fascinating – from the early Mickey Mouse shorts, with their rubbery imagination, through to the glorious Technicolor anarchy of *Three Little Pigs* and *Pinocchio*, the towering artistic achievement of *Fantasia*, the heart-wringing naturalism of *Bambi* and the dazzling widescreen gothic menace of *Sleeping Beauty*. Far too often overlooked when it comes to the world’s most important filmic figures, Uncle Walt changed the world and, at his peak, made cinema which has barely aged a jot.

And for that, this fiercely independent spirit deserves to be far more than just a footnote to the modern identity of a Goliath-sized corporate entity. ☺

5) SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS (1937)

Ideally this should be seen on a double-bill with the short cartoon *The Old Mill*, which debuted the technology that would permit the incredible field of depth indicated by *Snow White*.



6) PINOCCHIO (1940)

At a time when many Americans had fled the Great Depression to the promise of employment in Soviet Russia, *Pinocchio* gives us Pleasure Island – where everything is free, paradise is promised and mansions exist solely to be smashed up. Of course, those who buy into this turn into jackasses. It’s a nightmarish vision.

7) FANTASIA (1940)

Undoubtedly Disney’s masterpiece, *Fantasia* took some of the world’s most famous and intricate classical music and let the minds of the studio’s animation department run wild. The result is mesmerising.

8) DUMBO (1941)

It was the beginning of the end for Walt’s dedication to his animation department, but with *Dumbo* – and then *Bambi* – at least we see a consistency of heart-wrenching charm and a sympathy for the underdog.



9) THREE CABALLEROS (1944)

Arguably the closest Disney got to matching the sheer insanity of Tex Avery or Warner Bros, this was also the great man’s first attempt to mix cartoon characters with live action.

10) DISNEYWORLD/ DISNEYLAND

To get the real Disney park experience you really need to visit one of these wonderlands. We’d wager that Orlando has the upper hand as its Magic Kingdom is prettier and more expansive. Both parks have Space Mountain, though, still one of the world’s foremost roller coasters.





Words: Russell Lewin

Philip Raby, Bath,
5 November 2012.

Words: Russell Lewin

Let's hear it – for the last time? – for the great British video shop!

The video shop, where so many of us spent our formative years learning to love films, is almost dead. They first started opening in the late 1970s, reaching the peak of their success in the late '80s and early '90s. Since then it's been a steady decline, with that decline accelerating in recent years.

Here we talk to Philip Raby, manager of the last remaining video shop in the city of Bath, about his experiences in the business. Or former manager, when you read this, because in January 2013, his On The Video Front closed its doors for the final time, after 26 years.



So... how's business?

Terrible! Really, really, really terrible. I've been anticipating my demise for two and a half years, but now I think we're looking at Christmas to close down.

Can you give some figures to illustrate how the business has declined?

I'd say the best period I ever had was between [other local video shops] MVC closing and Choices opening, around 2001: one month I averaged £600 a day in takings. Nowadays I'd say in an average week I'd do less than £1,000. The landscape has changed beyond all recognition – even two or three years ago I was doing fairly good business.

So why the dramatic decline?

I attribute it to lots of things, like people buying DVDs from supermarkets and online, renting from Lovefilm, downloading, watching *Strictly Come Dancing* and that sort of thing, playing computer games... those are the main things but I also suspect there's a whole generation of kids who don't watch films. And since they've put new parking regulations into effect outside my

shop no one can stop for even a microsecond. Whatever there was going has been killed off.

It must feel like everything's been against you in the last few years.

If I wanted to feel victimised I would do but you go to London and there's a shop in Notting Hill called Video City, which inspired me originally. In London you have a larger catchment area, whereas in Bath most people come from outside and they drive in – and then have to do so again to bring the video back. But if you'd said to me in 1986 I'd have 26 years I'd say thank you very much! It's like when people say they don't want a new Tesco or Sainsbury's in town, then they all go there. Nostalgia is cheap, and I'm not being nasty because I'm the same as everybody else – you don't necessarily do the same things as you say.

So what are you going to do next?

Well, I already run the Bath Film Festival, so from my point of view that's more important than the video shop. I've loved the shop and I'm very fond of it but it's had its day and there's nothing I can do to bring it back. I think in five



David Puttnam visits in the golden days.



years time there won't be any video shops about at all.

You really believe that?

There are still people who buy LPs but it's the difference between selling and renting – I mean, do you rent films from a shop?

No, I've got a Lovefilm account.

You don't have to do anything or go anywhere – it's a great model, and if I'd been Richard Branson I'd have thought of it ten years ago. I actually did think of it but it wasn't something I wanted to do.

So you'll mainly now be preoccupied by the Film Festival?

“When *Fantasia* came out on video I sold 50 in one morning. I'd be lucky to sell 50 films in a month now”



One of Philip's efforts to stimulate business.



I've got ambitious plans. We're showing *The Passion Of Joan Of Arc* at Bath Abbey, with music from the two chaps from Goldfrapp, and *The Last Temptation Of Christ* at Wells Cathedral. That's my double bill for next year – religious films in religious buildings!

Are there any gimmicks you tried to keep the shop afloat?

We've sold posters, postcards, we tried renting computer games but they never came back! Last year for two months I reduced the prices and now on Wednesdays we charge £1 for everything, but if you did that every day people would get used to it and it wouldn't make any difference. When I told the customers we were closing they were upset but it doesn't make any difference. The market has changed, the business model has been and done. I think its peak was before DVD, with videos. I remember when *Fantasia* came out on video in '87 or '88, I sold 50 in one morning. I'd be lucky to sell 50 films in a month now, of any kind. I'd pay £60 to buy a film and it wouldn't be available anywhere



else for six months; I could charge a few quid for it every night, and then at the end of that time still sell it for 20 quid! It was great.

Do you think the nation will be poorer without video shops?

I wouldn't criticise Lovefilm because I think they do a good job but when I speak to people who use Lovefilm – which I've never done and you may have a better experience – some say the quality isn't all that good, they get scratched discs. The thing about the video shop is that you can go down there, see what you want to watch and take it off the shelf; with Lovefilm you have to book ahead with a list and they'll send you whatever they send you. But that will change when people can download or stream things more. I'd be interested to see if people go on buying films; I think bookshops survive because we like going there and choosing books. But HMV is only just barely alive and if they go I don't know who else will sell DVDs, apart from supermarkets, and they just sell the top titles.

I guess they'll go online.

Absolutely, but why do books survive as a physical entity in shops and DVDs don't?

Maybe it's partly to do with browsing through pages; maybe bookshops attract slightly different people...

Maybe it's the quality of books – you can buy thousands of really good books, there probably

aren't that many really good films when you think about it...

Do you have a Sky subscription?

I have Sky, I don't have Sky films.

You don't have the movie channels?

Well there's no point – I've got a video shop! That would be a waste of money [laughs].

Okay, some more general questions about life in the video shop: how often did you have to turn away underage customers?

Well, we were – are – very strict about age and if there's any doubt about it you ask them for ID. Occasionally a parent would come in and say we'd rented a film to their child who was underage and we'd say we're very sorry, and we'd then put the date of birth on the card.

Have you seen all the DVDs in your shop?

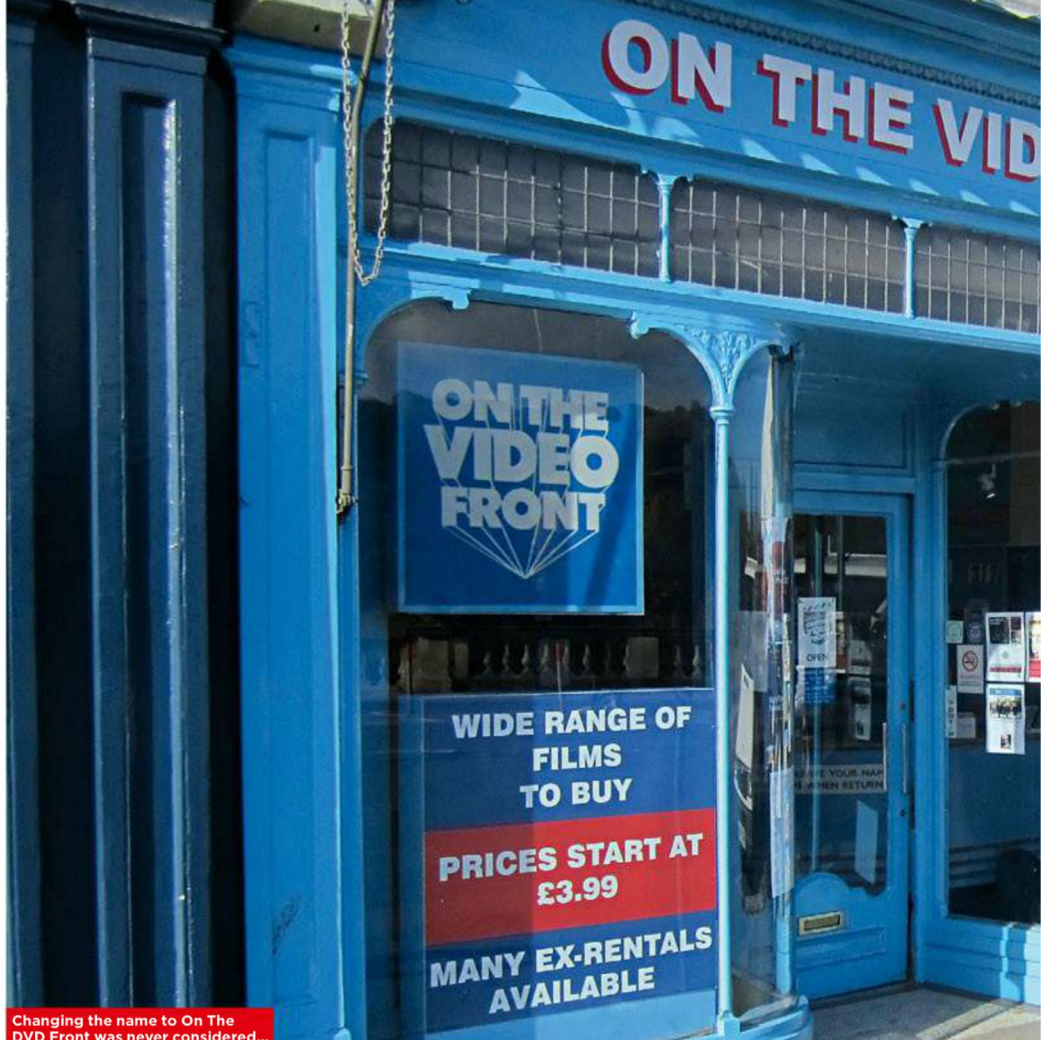
I would lie if I said I'd seen all of them – I've seen about 90 per cent.

Why not the other 10 per cent?

Life's too short, I can't watch everything! I don't watch the TV series. When I'm old and retired I can sit and watch seven series of *The Wire*, but until then... I actually can't bring myself to watch a few of them, *Antichrist* for instance – I like the director [Lars Von Trier], but I just can't. I've never been much for nastiness, I don't really like horror films. My idea of horror film is *Don't Look Now*, *The Wicker Man*, *Rosemary's Baby*, character-based and scary, whereas all the *Saw* films, well, it's porn.

How did you choose what you stocked?

Originally I used to buy everything – until I got poor. In the golden days you'd buy 20 copies of a film, if it was a big film. About ten years ago they introduced differential pricing system, so if you were buying it to sell you'd pay £10 and if you



Changing the name to On The DVD Front was never considered...

were buying it to rent you'd pay £25. I cut back then. But before that I'd buy everything. Except the really obscure things like Kim Newman reviews in *Empire*.

Looking around your shop, you have pretty good quality and there's an eclectic mix.

I wanted to create the kind of video shop that I'd like to go to. Video shops used to be the seediest places in the world – literally people in macs, because there was no censorship, you could rent anything. They were fleapits basically.

Don't you think the seedy old video shops had a sort of charm?

Oh yeah, I think it was great we had no censorship for a start, but it was unfortunate that they used that in order to show *I Spit On Your Grave* and that sort of thing. By the time I opened, the main thing I had to do was to choose between VHS and Betamax – I was so lucky it literally happened just as VHS had won. And then when Blu-ray came out I thought I'd better

“A while back I thought I'd better get some Blu-rays in – and no one has ever rented a single one!”

Boxing clever?

Meet Mark Critchell: a man with a huge collection of old-style VHS tapes

How old are you and how did you get into VHS collecting?

I'm 38 now, and for my 13th birthday my parents and uncle bought me my first VCR and a trio of my favourite films on tape – *Alien*, *Aliens* and *An American Werewolf In London*. My collection spawned from there.

Do you have fond memories of old-school video shops?

My first experience of a video hire shop came after a work colleague of my dad's lent him a Betamax VCR while he was away on holiday for two weeks. I must have been about eight years old, and remember the shop – Video Solent – literally having thousands of films. We must have been in there hiring two or three tapes every other evening over that two weeks! I went on to work part-time in a video hire shop while I was at university in the early '90s, although most of my

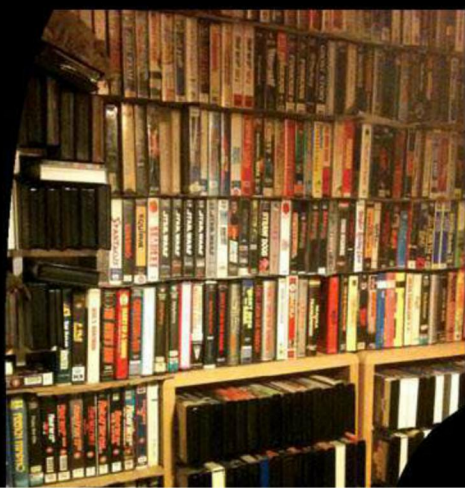
wages went on ex-rental tapes from that shop [laughs].

So what's the appeal of collecting what's effectively a defunct technology?

Pure nostalgia. Video tape covers can often feature different artwork to their DVD counterparts, with some tape covers featuring really beautiful illustrations. Sometimes, in the case of very low-budget films, they never received a DVD release either, so old tapes can be the only way of seeing the film.

Do you have to have the tape AND the cover AND the box, or is just one of the first two okay?

It's preferable, and often more valuable, if a tape comes with its original cover and in its original box featuring the distributor's logo. Some cheaper boxes got damaged, so shop owners would swap the tape and sleeve into a new box and





get some Blu-rays in. And no one has ever rented a single Blu-ray.

Is that right?!

I got half a dozen of them and they just sat there. No one ever complained about them not being there, and even now no one has ever come in and asked if I have any.

Ever had anyone complain that a film they've rented is rubbish?

All the time! Occasionally you say, "I told you not to watch it and you still went and watched it," or they'll come in and say I said it was good and I'll say, "Well you know not to go with my recommendations!" Everyone knows it's

It's time to... INDULGE THE EDITOR

Video Shops in the '80s

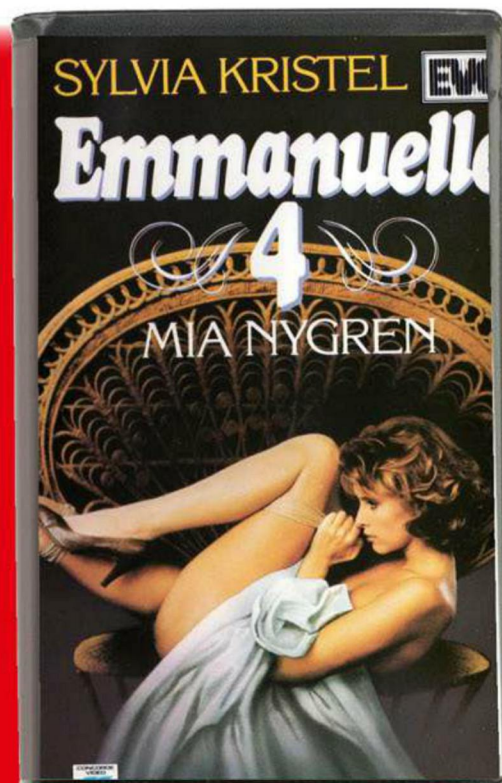
I probably used to spend as long in video shops as I used to watching the films I'd rented from them. At one stage there were scores of them in my area, new ones constantly popping up like Tribbles. A new one would materialise and I'd be there, signing up even if they had just the one title I wanted to see.

The first one I remember being a member of was one in a garage, a petrol station. My mum would drive me to it. At first, they had all the video covers in plastic folders in a big file, and since the 200-odd films were of every sort, it led to mildly embarrassing episodes where both me and my mum sifted through the porn covers. I played it cool and the first video I ever rented was *The Wrath Of Khan*.

A few months later, by which time I'd learnt to drive so could visit the shop sans mother, the video covers were all put with their boxes and shifted to a wonderful little room, grey concrete, cut off from the rest of the world, at the back of the building. I could stand there, by myself, and have four walls surrounding me of big-boxes VHSs, many with the most lurid artwork imaginable. (You remember this, collectors, right? Wasn't it bliss?!) I'm somewhat ashamed to say – here, for the first time ever! – that when alone in there once I stole the nudie cover of *Emmanuelle 4* for my own personal gratification. I profoundly apologise for the difficulties this must have caused to both the shop and people wishing to rent *Emmanuelle 4*.

I collected video membership cards like a spider collects flies and would sometimes troop from one to another to find that most desired, most potentially thrilling flick. Before reaching 18 I must have rented at least a hundred 18 or X-rated films – and only once can I remember being refused service (I think the video shop's bosses were there and the chap felt he couldn't – which was embarrassing). A female shop assistant even allowed me to rent *Famous Tits And Arses* once – which was also embarrassing.

I can remember the smells and the sounds of those video shops, I can remember the faces of those who served me (where are they now? What happens to people after they've worked in a video shop?), and I can remember them disappearing, one by one. They fell like gunned-down zombies in a parking lot. But I'll always have my big-box memories, and I'll cherish them.



would bin the originals, making certain boxes sought after among collectors.

How many have you got?

By the early to mid-'90s, my collection had expanded to well over 1,500 tapes, and storage was becoming an issue. I used to rent a bedsit when I was a student, and the landlord used to say, "It's like stepping into a '70s video shop," every time he came round. I did, however, trim my tape collection down a bit when DVD first emerged, but got bitten by the tape-collecting bug again about four years ago, which has expanded my collection back up to over 1,000 tapes. Much to my girlfriend's frustration.

What was the initial spur?

Initially my sole aim was to try and complete the DPP 72 list of "video nasties". I never managed to complete it the first time around, but branched out

into the tapes featured in Marc Morris's *Art Of The Nasty* book and I currently only need about 26 titles to complete it. But a handful of titles are listed on the pre-cert forum as "one-offs", with a couple of titles changing hands in the last four years for over £2k! I don't limit myself to just horror. In fact, I was chuffed to add a couple of original Rank double-feature Norman Wisdom films to my shelves a couple of weeks back. Although it's not one I would add to my collection, I did pick up an original Warner pre cert of *Jane Fonda's Workout* in a charity shop for 50p earlier in the year, which I then listed on eBay at 99p, for it to end on £12! Crazy, eh?

Do you accept that some of them have amazing covers but are rubbish films? Absolutely. Distributors would often use lavish or graphically gory sleeve artwork – if it was a horror film – to lure the

punters into hiring or buying what would turn out to be a right turd of a movie.

Do you have also lots of DVDs? What about Blu-rays?

Over the years I've built up quite a sizeable collection of DVDs too. Mainly discs from the States, as nine times out of 10 they'd be the uncensored prints of films we never got to see in the UK. I also started to buy Blu-rays about four years ago, although I'm conscious not to "treble-up" [tape/DVD/Blu-ray] too much.

Surely most of them will one day break?

Over the years, I've had VCRs chew up a handful of tapes so badly they had to be binned. Although, if a tape just snaps or succumbs to a bit of mould, you can clean them up and repair them. If tapes are stored away from direct sunlight at normal room temperature then they should last a few more years yet.

subjective, it's not like you can give a scientific approval on these things.

What are your highlights from the 26 years?

During the 1992 General Election Barry Norman came down to Bath to support Don Foster, because he was a Liberal Democrat. Somebody rang up and said could Barry Norman come to On The Video Front and be there for people to meet him. So he turned up for an hour or so and people were asking him for his opinion on films! We also had Tom King in once, then Minister of Northern Ireland, he came in with a bodyguard. He wanted to join up and get a film, but we told him we needed some ID – he was like, “Do you know who I am?!” His bodyguard had to join, and then he brought it back late and didn't pay the fine.

You must have seen some eccentric characters in your time...?

Someone came in once and said they were looking for a certain film. I asked what the title was. They said they didn't know. I asked who was in it. No, they couldn't remember that. Could they remember what happens in it? No, they couldn't recall... they literally didn't know anything about the film and they wanted me to tell what film it was!

You presumably have die-hard regulars?

Even now I've got characters who come in every single day – to mention no names, and they're very nice – but you think, “Where's your life?” They're in there every day!

So they'll get a couple of films every single day?

Oh yeah, and they'll spend half an hour chatting to the staff, it's almost like a social club at times. It certainly was in the old days. There's an old guy whose wife comes every Saturday and orders two obscure British films and has been doing that for 15 years.



Orders them?

She orders them for us to buy. Here's another story – Nicolas Cage used to live in Bath, as you know. I wasn't in the shop when he came in but he wanted to buy things like *Joe 90*, *Captain Scarlet* and *Thunderbirds*. He left the order and I looked at it and I thought it was daft, so I rang up the number he'd left and said look, all I'm going to do is order them off Amazon. He was fine with that and two or three times more he came in and gave us a list of Gerry Anderson shows for us to buy for him! Even today people will come in and say can you order such and such for me, so I'll go to Amazon, order it, take it to the shop and sell it to them! I suspect the internet is still a forbidden zone to some people.

What did you do if DVDs were returned to you damaged?

It was difficult because you can't check every DVD – you check it's the right film in the right box obviously but you can't check the quality of it, and we don't have a computer system, we do it on index cards, so you can't go back and see who last rented it, and even if you could someone could say “It wasn't me, guv”. How are you going to prove it? But there's a natural turnover of having to replace things. A lot of the time people would say it wouldn't play, so we'd put it in and it'd play fine. I have to say DVDs are no better than

videos in terms of quality – some people eat their lunch off them, I swear. Ninety-eight per cent of customers are great. You'd occasionally get people who wouldn't bring films back; you'd ring them up, or you'd go and knock on their door.

How many carpets has the shop got through over the years?

Well, we've actually had the same floor for 26 years. I paid quite a lot of money for it but it was really worth it as it's been amazingly durable – it looks like wood but it's Amtico, artificial flooring. Good investment.

What are your personal favourite films?

My top three would have to be: *Les Enfants Du Paradis*, the French black and white film, made right at end of World War Two; *Groundhog Day*; and on the basis of my favourite film when I was young, *101 Dalmatians*. There are others, of course: *There Will Be Blood*, *The Battle Of Algiers*, *L'Atalante*, *Some Like It Hot* – I'd say there are about 10 perfect films which I wouldn't improve a word of, and there are other films that I'd watch over and again.

Any sci-fi or horror favourites?

Well, in 1973 I went to the Norwich Odeon where they were showing *The Wicker Man* with *Don't Look Now* on a double-bill. That was great. The best SF film I've ever seen hasn't been released here yet: *Cloud Atlas*. I loved it, I saw it in Toronto. It's the best part of three hours long but the audience was completely rapt by it and they all applauded at the end. I don't like *Blade Runner*, I don't really like Ridley Scott films apart from *Matchstick Men*, I'm not a *Star Wars* fan...

Do you go to the cinema much?

Oh yes, I used to do DVD reviews for the *Bath Chronicle* and *Venue* and I have my website Frontrowfilms.co.uk. I enjoy going to the cinema. Recently I saw *Skyfall* and thought it was okay; I don't like Bond films but I like Daniel Craig.

When the shop was in its pomp, what were the busiest and quietest periods?

At Christmas we were really busy, we used to have pages and pages of bookings. People would

“I've got characters who come into the shop every single day, and you think, ‘Where's your life?’”

Mark's top tapes

The Amazing Mr No Legs

Has never received a DVD release in the UK, but it's actually a really good, and pretty violent, crime thriller.

The Astro Zombies

With a sensationalist cover like this, I'd be very surprised if this Ted V Mikels slice of madness wasn't a top renter back in the day.

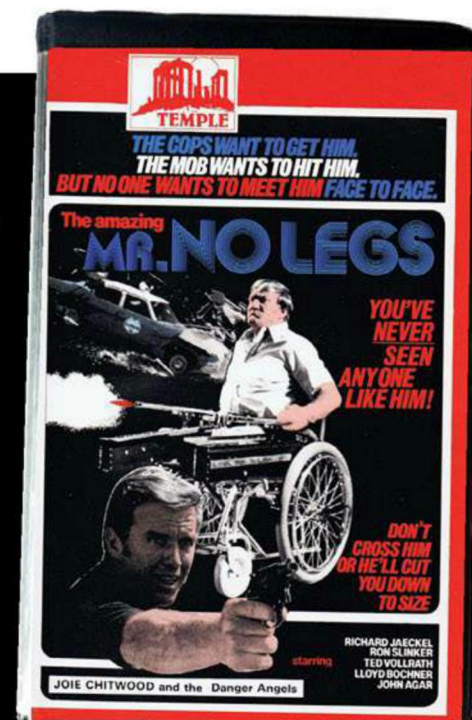
Spider Baby/Reefer Madness

A double-feature tape, which I especially like as the cover's designer appears to have been on an acid trip. The small-budget label – Hikon – only

distributed seven films on video tape, and nearly every one sported a cover that was just as eclectic.

Creepers

A cut-to-ribbons and re-titled UK release of Dario Argento's *Phenomena*. My first attempt to watch this film was thwarted after discovering some bugger had recorded 20 minutes of *EastEnders* over the tape I'd hired in the late '80s. But the cover features some lovely artwork by renowned illustrator Graham Humphreys, who also designed the cover for famous nasty *The Evil Dead*.





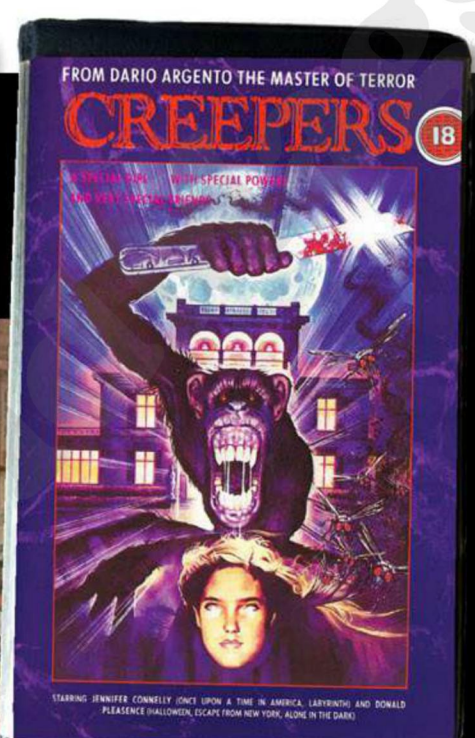
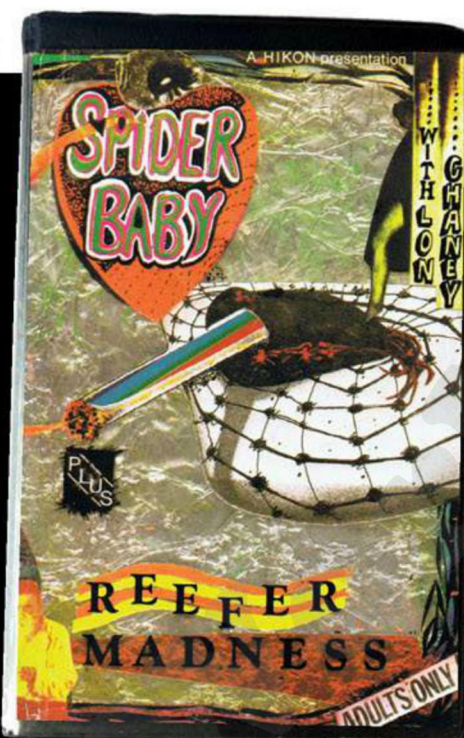
come in and book films, so we'd have 30, 40, 50 films booked. People think they'll watch films over Christmas and they make their lists – *It's A Wonderful Life*, whatever – and they have them from Christmas Eve for several days. The deadest times were hot summer days, June, July time, when the schools are in – when schools are out you get busier, or you did.

Is there an embarrassment factor when someone rents a dirty movie?

I thought you might ask that! We've never really done dirty movies – I'm not moral about it, but once you start renting them you change the shop, and the whole point of the place is that it's a wholesome, family-friendly place which is about films, and porn's not really about films, is it? I

do remember somebody coming in and asking where we kept our blue movies. We said we didn't have any but he didn't believe us! He was convinced they were under the counter.

Check out Philip's website Fronrowfilms.co.uk, which features hundreds of reviews of films, and plenty more besides.





W (the) Web

The Best Film Websites

There are lots of great websites on films out there that you may not have discovered. Let us try and help...

Words: Russell Lewin, David Cromarty, Nicole Smith

<http://www.freemoviesonline.com>
Watch scores of public domain movies, including plenty of sci-fi and horror ones. Lots of old Republic serials and – of course – public domain staple *Night Of The Living Dead*.

<http://www.kids-in-mind.com>
Helpful – and incredibly in-depth – information about the sex, violence and profanity you can expect to see in new movies. The archive goes back around 20 years.

<http://www.leasthelpful.com>
Ridiculous/funny reviews on Amazon, but not strictly movies, let alone SFX material. A great timewaster, though.

<http://www.superherohype.com>
All the latest superhero news, as well as coverage of the likes of Bond, Star Wars and Transformers.

<http://www.shocktillyoudrop.com>
Sister to the above site, dedicated to horror in all

its forms, and pretty well written. There's lots of suitably "horror-ish" blacks and greys and dark browns in the colour scheme.

<http://www.geeksofdoom.com>
News, features and reviews of all things geek-related, including podcasts devoted to technology, comics, films and Doctor Who.

<http://www.movieviral.com>
Viral campaigns for movies and TV; a good



place to start getting excited about upcoming superhero blockbusters before the frequent crashing disappointment.

<http://www.geekcrashcourse.com>
Weekly short videos to give folk a crash course in upcoming/seasonal franchises/fandom so they can join in geeky conversations.

<http://www.movie-moron.com>
Standard movie stuff done well: reviews, lists, trailers, a forum and plenty more.

<http://www.screenrant.com>
The latest movie news with a lot of attention paid to stuff from the SFX genres. In fact, probably around 86.7%.

<http://www.bloody-disgusting.com>
All things horror: movies, TV, games, comics. Tons of reviews, interviews and news make this a place you can easily kill time (perhaps with a big, bloody knife).

<http://www.allmymovieguide.blogspot.co.uk>
One chap's dedicated film reviews website, with an astonishing 5,000+ capsule reviews of SF, horror, fantasy and all other genre films.

<http://www.eccentric-cinema.com>
Sometimes controversial, always engrossing. Reviews and information on hundreds of strange and obscure films. Intelligently written, full of passion (and screen-shots of naked women, although he's shy of showing lady gardens).

<http://www.themarysue.com>
Describes itself as a guide to girl geek culture. While it can be rather quick to anger at perceived sexism, it offers a different view to most other sites, and certainly prompts debate.

<http://www.slashfilm.com>
Movie news with plenty of attention paid towards the stuff we like at SFX. The "Cool Stuff" tab is particularly neat.

<http://www.toplessrobot.com>
A self-deprecating look at nerd-friendly films, TV and comics. A highlight is the Impressive Act of Nerdy section, which celebrates the extreme lengths fans will go to for their passions, and includes a scarily authentic home-made War Machine costume.

<http://www.filmdrunk.uproxx.com>
Some might be put off by the assertive prose style, but for those who take the comments in the way (we think) they're intended, this is a very entertaining site run by people with a passion for film.

<http://www.comingsoon.net>
The latest dates/stills/trailers on new and anticipated releases. If you like your websites very red – and we do! – you'll love it.

<http://www.moviemistakes.com>
All sorts of howlers from all sorts of flicks. They reckon there are a whopping 337 mistakes in Superman IV. Ooh, they should make a television series like this.

<http://www.scifimoviepage.com>
Quite a fun site with the usual gubbins – reviews, news etc – and lots of pesky ads for a Mature Dating website. Or, er, is it just us that, um, they come up for...? [ahem]

<http://www.giantfreakinrobot.com>
The latest on sci-fi plus real science news and breakthroughs. Some items have a foot in both – like a report on Scientology...

<http://www.zergnet.com>
Hundreds of links to lists and countdowns of all things videogames, TV, movie and celebs, eg top 15 horror movies you never saw.

<http://www.geeksareshy.net>
Sci-fi fandom/franchise pictures, cosplay, news, trailers, t-shirts etc. Sexy "geek" at top of page.

<http://www.unleashthefanboy.com>
Latest on sci-fi, fantasy, horror TV/games/movies. "Why is it so difficult to do justice to Wonder Woman?" is the sort of opinion piece they do.

<http://www.filmofilia.com>
News, trailers, posters, reviews, festivals and more in this small but perfectly formed site.

<http://www.sfx.co.uk>
And how could we forget...
The world's greatest SF website, no substitute accepted.



“Don’t Feed The Troll!”

We poke the internet and see how it reacts

Words: Barry Pseudonym

Internet trolls. Aside from Kelvin McKenzie obviously, is there really a lower life form? We’ve all been in chat rooms or scoured the comments sections of websites – *SFX* included – and seen the obvious, word-baiting posts – mean-spirited “come and ‘ave a go” hatefests that barely skim the surface of literacy. But sometimes, when you syphon off the nastiness, you can actually have a bit of (mostly) harmless fun, posting something intentionally provocative or contentious, or just being supernaturally dumb and waiting for the responses to come. So I’ve been busy across the web, posing as both Dean Leech (single, thirties, three GCSEs, likes Holly Willoughby) and Leeeeeeeeeee John (restlessly married, forties, ugly wife – I just want you to picture who I had in my head) and unleashed the two of them into cyberspace. Here goes...

Are SF films automatically better?

Even the most zealous *SFX* readers would be pushed to say that *Battlefield Earth* is better than, I dunno, *In Bruges*, by virtue of being set on an alien planet. But how would that statement fare in the caverns of the Internet Movie Database message board? I was expecting Dean Leech to be hounded out for speaking such heresy, but it wasn’t quite like that...



Are SF Films Better?

From: Dean.Leech112

I love sci-fi movies and I think even average SF movies are better than most other ones. In fact, I hardly watch any non-sci-fi. I think there's more imagination and inventiveness in a sci-fi film and that any film just showing real life is going to look pretty boring compared to it. So, is anyone else with me? Are SF films better?



Are SF Films Better?

From: Mr Book

Science fiction films could be really good if they ever get around to making one.



Are SF Films Better?

From: LoveTheBombFilms

Well it depends on tastes but they aren't the most popular. The main flaw of sci-fi films is that they must include extra exposition to explain the sci-fi world. Even after that exposition the authenticity and cohesiveness of the sci-fi world is usually compromised compared to real-world films. Also the quality of a film doesn't usually come from its inventiveness (imo) but rather its dealing with the human condition in an entertaining and dramatically pleasing way. Therefore good real-world films without the flaws of sci-fi films are generally going to be better. However of course we all crave a little imagination in our lives so when a well constructed sci-fi world meets with a good storyline it can be quite refreshing.



Are SF Films Better?

From: m-slovac79

Personally i think the Western genre has been usually a fairly safe bet to me to at least like as not to many are made but when they are most of them are usually at least Thumbs Up status.



Into Darkness trailer

From: Dean.Leech112

I hate Abrams' take on Star Trek. It looks like a good film, but it's not Star Trek. Star Trek makes you smile, but this just looks grim and depressing. Bring back Roddenberry, who would probably not like these new movies. I thought Chris Pine was good, but make him a different captain. He's not Kirk. There is only one and that is Shatner. Come on, let's stand up for old Trek.



Into Darkness trailer

From: Patrick Laxson

Oh lord, shut up please.



Into Darkness trailer

From: Dean.Leech112

Why? I've been polite. I don't like new Star Trek. Will people remember Chris Pine and Zachery Quinto in 100 years time? No. Even my mum and dad prefer old Star Trek, though they haven't seen the new one.



Into Darkness trailer

From: GameTerminal

I have to disagree. I'm a huge fan of the old trek movies and I think jj abrams is doing an admirable and great job on the franchise. His first star trek movie was probably the most fun I've had watching a star trek yet.



Into Darkness trailer

From: jabari garvin

there has to be conflict, thats wat can mak a movie great



Into Darkness trailer

From: kylephantom4

Roddenberry is dead, so they can't bring him back. Also I absolutely love the new Trek films, its exactly what Star Trek needed, and just because the new trek films have basically taken over the franchise, doesnt mean we won't miss old trek, as thats where it all began right?



We took Dean's comment over to the *Star Trek* thread on Gallifrey Base too (he's Leeeeeeeeeee John on here) which sprouted these responses...



Into Darkness trailer

From: Leeeeeeeeeee John

I hate Abrams' take on Star Trek. It looks like a good film, but it's not ST. Bring back Roddenberry, who would probably not like these new movies.



Into Darkness trailer

From: IMForeman

You can't. [Roddenberry]'s dead. Let's not judge before we've seen it, yeah?



Into Darkness trailer

From: CJ

Raising the dead is *never* the answer, people. There should be another way. I'm confused because the one we've actually already seen wasn't "depressing" and was full of old-school Star Trek 'smiles', so what's to hate about that one on this basis? There must be something else you don't like about it? And then this second one we haven't actually seen, how do we know from the previews alone that it will be depressing?



Into Darkness trailer

From: Garovorkin

Abrams revived trek. Yes he gave it a different spin and put in new actors in the iconic roles but in the final analysis, it's still star trek. Like it or not, it's here to stay. Do you think Dr Who is still Doctor who even though the original actor William Hartnell is no longer playing the part? What about James Bond? is it still Bond without Sean Connery?



Into Darkness trailer

From: David Tims

The cast were all fantastic. High budget effects enhance a film if the plot is there, and it was. And you can't flat out say right now that an actor will/won't be remembered. That's just ridiculous. You're entitled to not enjoy the film, but to flat out say it was bad because of your own cynicism is not good form.



Into Darkness trailer

From: Lisa Lavelle

Right, we should all go and watch something really uplifting, like ST I, The Motion Picture, or ST V, The Final Frontier.

Back to the IMDb, and a supernaturally thick comment from Dean regarding old SF movies.



Old Sci-Fi Movies

From: Dean.Leech112

The trouble with old SF films is that we know they didn't happen and so many of the effects aren't so good. I know cool modern films will be thought of like that in future but at the moment, most of the old science fiction films I've seen I've not been too impressed by. I love Star Wars because that isn't too teddy but most of the other supposed classics look very dated now. What do others think?



Old Sci-Fi Movies

From: BloodVVank

Effects work and how up to date a film is mean little to me in the context of science fiction, or any other genre.

On YouTube's *Star Trek Into Darkness* trailer page, Dean came out as a militant *Original Series* fan, outraged at this newfangled modern *Star Trek*. But *Trek* fans are sensitive creatures...



Old Sci-Fi Movies

From: Ashvinvterminator

In science fiction its the idea that matters.

Old Sci-Fi Movies

From: Dio52

That's not an issue with the good films. It doesn't matter that it didn't happen. The point of good sci fi is not to accurately predict the future, its to explore concepts made feasible through a fictional, potential alternate reality.

Old Sci-Fi Movies

From: Progressive-Element

Have you tried any of these?
2001 - A Space Odyssey
Planet of the Apes
Soylent Green
Westworld
The War of the Worlds, 1953
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, 1954
Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1956
Forbidden Planet
The Time Machine, 1960
Silent Running

Leeeeeeeeeee John then went on Gallifrey Base's movie section to ask about other forumites' weirdest movie crushes. Brilliantly, he didn't get ridiculed for his strange taste in women...



Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: Leeeeeeeeeee John

Does anyone have any weird movie crushes? You know, men and women who aren't the pretty leads? I've always had a soft spot for the woman who played Carol Marcus in The Wrath of Khan and the middle-aged Lorraine in Back to the Future Pt 2. What are other people's?

Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: Iron Moustache

You know Edward Scissorhands has an Evangelist neighbour who thinks he's evil and so he makes the bush in her front lawn look like a demon? Her.

Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: Hawkeye Pierce

The mum in My Big Fat Greek Wedding.

Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: Sobol

Lorraine's *always* played by Lea Thompson in the BTTF trilogy - she's just wearing prosthetics as Lorraine Tannen.

Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: Dalek Omega

Missi Pyle in Galaxy Quest.

Weirdest Movie Crushes

From: dannysquib

Despite being fairly and squarely heterosexual I find I'm irresistibly drawn to Anton Walbrook in The Red Shoes and The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp.

Back on YouTube, Dean decided to take issue with Zach Snyder's stripped down *Superman* remake...

Man Of Steel trailer

From: Dean.Leech112

This Superman film looks too different to the others. It should feel a bit the same. Why cant they respect the past like bryan singer with his underrated movie Superman Returns. I will probably not see this as it looks too depressing and will be shitting on the grave of Christopher Reeve. But it maybe good, but I don't think so unlike The Dark Knight which was immense. But all rule Bryan Singer and down to Zach Snyder.

Man Of Steel trailer

From: JerseyBoy489

what its suppose to be different stupid ass



Man Of Steel trailer

From: Patrick McClain

What's wrong with different. Sometimes change is good.



Dean, lonely and single with little hope of finding a home for his crown jewels, even tried the IMDb message boards in order to find a date...

Female SF Fan Wanted!

From: Dean.Leech112

I live in the West Country area of England. Are there any geek chicks on here who live around this area who might want to start going to the cinema with me? I'm 34, I like sci-fi films and reading and would love to meet some fellow (female) SF fans from around the area to talk SF and see films with. Please respond.

Female SF Fan Wanted!

From: Bob_Brooker

Try the Movie Awards board ... and don't forget to mention your appreciation for Amy Adams.

Female SF Fan Wanted!

From: HenryTheKing

TAMizabeth
ring-a-ling-a-ling-a-ding-dong-ding
Good thinking. She's pretty desperate.

Female SF Fan Wanted!

From: Dean.Leech112

Who is TAMizabeth? Does she live near Bath? Is she attractive?

Female SF Fan Wanted!

From: trymyproduct11

Dude, you're trolling an internet message board for pussy. You don't get to be picky about attractiveness.

Was this review helpful to you?

Dean Leech gets on Amazon too...

PERSONAL PROFILE
Content by DeanLeech
Customer Reviews: 2
Top Reviewer Ranking: 2,684,297
Helpful Votes: 0

Learn more about Your Profile.

Reviews Written by DeanLeech
Show: Most recent reviews

Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures [Blu-ray] [1981] [Region Free]
Dvd - Harrison Ford
Price: £28.99

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful

★★★★★ **Where's the fifth movie?**, 13 Jan 2013

This review is from [Indiana Jones: The Complete Adventures \[Blu-ray\] \[1981\] \[Region Free\]](#)

It's well known that Lucas and Spielberg filmed a FIFTH Indiana Jones movie and 1998 and quickly regretted it, burying the film. It's - no pun intended - the Holy Grail to Indy fans and I'd love to finally see it released. It's rumoured to feature Indy searching for a the Spear of Destiny and stars Josh Hartnet and Miam Margolyes. So, come on Lucasfilm, let's have a release after all these years!

[Comment](#) | [Permalink](#)

El [Blu-ray]
Price: £8.00

★★★★★ **Apparently, this is a true story.**, 13 Jan 2013

Amazon Verified Purchase (What's this?)

This review is from [El \[Blu-ray\]](#)

My mum told me that this is based on a true story. Obviously the names have been changed (like an elf would be called Buddy!), but this ACTUALLY HAPPENED! I think the Dad worked as a tax collector though and lived in Reading in England, not New York, but everything else is absolutely true. The real truth has been suppressed.

[Comment](#) | [Permalink](#)

X IS FOR



Xmas

Xmas FACTOID

SF and fantasy films have only one serious rival over the Christmas holidays for TV exposure: Stephen Fry. Fry appeared on British television nearly 200 times over the last festive period!

Let's celebrate the celebration that only comes round once a year

Words: Russell Lewin

1988

Santa Claus: The Movie's first of many appearances on festive British TV was on Christmas Eve in '88.

Christmas Eve also saw an outing for Disney's *Mary Poppins*, just after 10 minutes of Tom and Jerry of course.

On Christmas Day we enjoyed *Back To The Future*'s TV debut, the odd rude word excised.



One thing Christmas means is good television. And one thing good television means is lots of sci-fi and fantasy films. For decades now, big blockbusters have become synonymous with the best time of the year. Can there be any greater proof

1990

What could be better for Christmas Day than the heart-warming and tear-jerking tale of *ET*.

On Christmas Day ITV early birds woke up to an animated *A Christmas Carol*, and an old *Batman* serial was on Channel Four!

The Snowman made his usual appearance on Channel Four.

of the fabulousness of our genre than how it dominates the TV schedules over Yuletide?

Don't believe us? Then take a look at some old copies of the *Radio Times* and others that we found in the back of our cupboard, demonstrating that for many years now *SFX*-type films have made it a Happy *SFX*mas!

1991

Tim Burton's dark *Batman* was perhaps a surprising choice for Christmas night on BBC One.

The only year the *Radio Times* published barcodes for certain VCRs - you could have used them to record, say, *Pinocchio* or *The BFG*.



Xmas FACTOID

1991's TV listings magazines were the first to feature all channels, thanks to the Conservative government's decision to deregulate TV listings (shortly after TV itself was deregulated).





1992

"The first showing on network television", as they used to say, of *Indiana Jones 3* followed the Queen back in '92.

Biggles, *The Bride*, *Santa Claus*, *The Birds*, *Herbie Goes Bananas*... as ever, fantasy galore in this year.

3.10pm Like father, like son: Indiana Jones and his dad are on the trail of a glittering prize

Carly's Web
3.25am-5.15am ITV
(Type Tees only)
02.25-05.15 (10 mins)
Mildly entertaining drama that spins a thin web of intrigue about a woman in the American Justice

Flying down to Rio
9.30am-11.00am BBC2
09.30-11.00 (90 mins)
Astaire and Rogers' sparkling opening partnership in which they romance via a musical tour of



Biggles (Christmas Eve BBC1): a rare peaceful moment for the First World War aviation hero (Neil Dickson)

48 *Radio Times*

Xmas FACTOID

Last Christmas on the free channels alone there were seven different versions of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* shown before Christmas Day was over.

9.10 Ghost
Oscar-winning supernatural thriller that proves true love never dies, starring Patrick Swayze, Demi Moore, Whoopi Goldberg. Soon after setting up home with girlfriend Molly Jensen, banker Sam Wheat is killed by a mugger. But Sam's spirit refuses to leave Molly. When he discovers that he was murdered, and that Molly's life is now in danger, he persuades a spiritualist Oda Mae to help him warn her.
pat. DEM MOORE
DEN MOORE

12.20am Watching Flocks
A contemporary meditation for Christmas Day.
Producer and writer: Peter Cushing
Starring: Peter Cushing
6276854

12.25 The Hound of the Baskervilles
Sherlock Holmes mystery, starring Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee. The great detective tries to solve the mystery of the Baskerville family, cursed for 200 years by a ghostly hound.
Peter Cushing
CHRISTOPHER LEE

1993

Ghost warmed the cockles on Christmas Day back in '93, while there was a ballet of *A Christmas Carol* on BBC Two.



1995

Steven Spielberg's *Hook* adorned BBC One on Christmas Day in '95. Poor Christmas Day '95.

1996

More Spielberg for Christmas '96, when *Jurassic Park* came along to join the likes of *The Wizard Of Oz*, *Roswell* and *Play It Again, Sam*.



Noel Edmonds hands out his special Christmas presents at 3.10pm

1997

Take your pick from Willy Wonka And the Chocolate Factory, The Flintstones or The Mask. Or Noel Edmonds.

1998

Miracle On 34th Street and *Babe* were among 98's treats – both preferable to *EastEnders*.

2005

Honey, I Shrunk The Kids, *Small Soldiers*, *Harry Potter*, *James Bond*, *The Secret Garden*... did you have time for turkey back in 2005?

2.50 Tomorrow Never Dies
★★★★ Well-paced spy caper. A media mogul attempts to ignite a conflict between Britain and China by sinking a British frigate and shooting down a Chinese fighter plane. The British Secret Service sends 007 to investigate. Review page 71.
James Bond Pierce Brosnan
Elliot Carver Jonathan Pryce
Wai Lin Michelle Yeoh
Paris Carver Teri Hatcher
"M" Judi Dench
"Q" Desmond Llewelyn
Miss Moneybags Samantha Bond
Director Roger Spottiswoode (1997, 12)
(S) (AD) (W) 59287347

2006

Boxing Day '06 saw the first *Pirates Of The Caribbean* film cheer folk up after the perennial East End misery.



2007

Christmas Day '07 had the usual avalanche of fantasy films on the box. We're not making all this up, see?



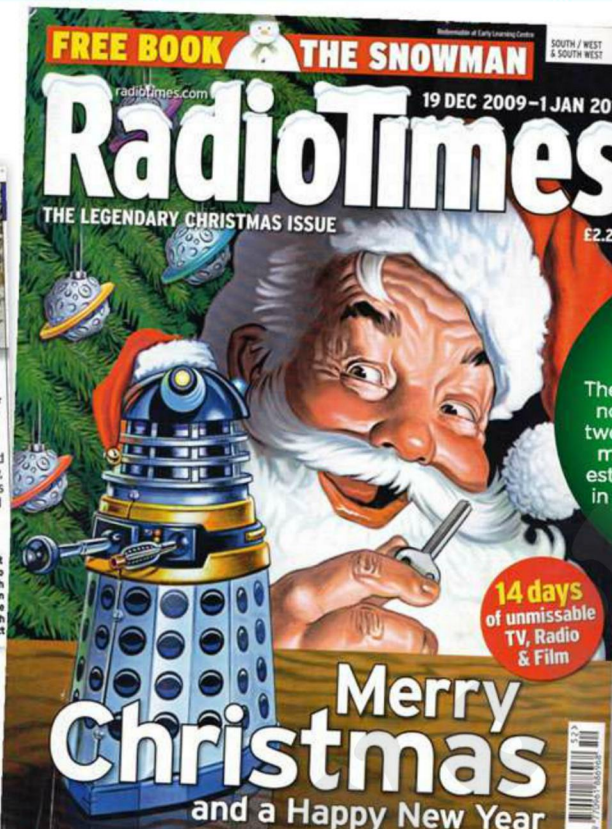
2008

If you were too stuffed to move by Boxing Day 2008 you could settle down for a trip to Narnia, or watch *Pirates 2*.



2009

A Dalek from *Doctor Who* – and asteroids on the tree – made for a splendid *Radio Times* cover in 2009.



2011

We've had *Doctor Who* brightening up Christmas Day since 2005, but 2011 also saw *Monsters V Aliens* on BBC One.

Xmas FACTOID

The Christmas *Radio Times* normally sells more than two million copies, and the most recent edition was estimated to have brought in total gross revenues of around £7.3m.

2012

Christmas just gone saw showings of *Shrek 4*, along with *Aladdin*, *Toy Story* and *Jurassic Park*, and scores of other fantasies.



Christmas Bizarre

Words: David Cromarty

Generally speaking, you know where you are with a Christmas film. It might start off a little unpleasant, but by the time the credits roll, all will be right with the world, and the main character will have learnt their lesson and discovered the joys of the festive season. There is, however, an exception to every rule, and every so often a filmmaker unleashes something that makes you wonder if they didn't suffer some festive catastrophe as a child...



SANTA CLAUS

DIRECTOR: RENE CARDONA, 1959

IN A NUTSHELL... Santa teams up with Merlin to battle Lucifer.

DOESN'T SOUND THAT STRANGE... Santa also lives in a castle in outer space.

ANY GOOD? The film is currently ranked the 57th worst film of all time on IMDb, with an average rating of 2.1/10.

FUN FACT: Won the Golden Gate Award for Best International Family Film at the San Francisco International Film Festival in 1959.



SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT SERIES

VARIOUS DIRECTORS, 1984-91

IN A NUTSHELL... Horror series featuring a crazed killer dressed as Santa Claus.

DOESN'T SOUND THAT STRANGE... And indeed it isn't, for the first couple of films. Starting with the third film, the series begins to dabble with the fantastic. The fourth and fifth films take this to new extremes with witches and killer robots with severe mother issues.

ANY GOOD? The first film has a more than respectable rating of 4/5 on Amazon.

FUN FACT: The debut film in the series opened the same weekend as Wes Craven's *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, which it briefly out-grossed before sales plummeted.



Christmas is a time for giving and receiving. So we treats they were expecting to get on the big day,

What I asked for for Christmas

What I got for Christmas



Steve O'Brien

Star Wars, *Planet Of The Apes* and *Indiana Jones* Blu-ray box sets.

Star Wars and *Indiana Jones* Blu-ray box sets. Boxing Day was given over to a wall-to-wall *Indy* rewatch.



Miles Hamer

Wayland Yutani t-shirt, *RoboCop* on Blu-ray, *Grindhouse* Blu-ray, *The Stanley Kubrick Collection*, Kim Newman's *Nightmare Movies*.

Nostromo t-shirt (close enough), Camp Crystal Lake t-shirt, *The Dark Knight Rises* DVD, a ukulele.



Nina Cromeyer Dieke

Star Wars beach towel, 2001 vintage t-shirt, *Prometheus* DVD, a book by Philip Pulman (after loving His Dark Materials trilogy), *Indiana Jones* DVD box set (only have them on tape!).

Star Wars Yoda key ring – more useful given the tragic lack of need for a beach towel in England. A NASA hoodie! *Hard Boiled Wonderland And The End Of The World* by Haruki Murakami.



David Cromarty

The first two seasons of *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles*, a selection of DC Animated Universe DVDs, *X-Men* and *The Adventures of Batman & Robin* for the Mega Drive.

Most of these, but only the first season of *Companion Chronicles*, plus a Dalek alarm clock and three James Bond novels by John Gardner (*Win, Lose Or Die*, *The Man From Barbarossa* and *Scorpius*).



Calum Waddell

A Nightmare On Elm Street collection on Blu-ray, *Toy Story 3* on Blu-ray, some Hong Kong kung-fu madness DVDs... anything else is gravy.

All of these. But my girlfriend surprised me with an *Awful Dr Orloff* t-shirt, Freddy Krueger figure and fed my exploitation film love with a UK quad poster of *Exterminator 2*. Wow.



Joseph McCabe

Star Wars Vintage Collection action figures, *Octopussy* and *The Living Daylights* Blu-rays, *Jaws* Blu-ray, *Best Of James Bond 50th Anniversary* 2-CD set.

Wedge Antilles Return Of The Jedi action figure. Toys "R" Us exclusive *Return Of The Jedi* Speeder Bike. *Octopussy*, *The Living Daylights*, *Die Another Day* Blu-rays. Set of classic *Star Trek* pint glasses.



Rhian Drinkwater

The Amazing Spider-Man, on Blu-ray, *Doctor Who* series 5, in some shape or form.

Both Spidey and *Doctor Who* on Blu-ray! My husband got all the Bond films, which I think really means I got them too. Lots of gin. What are people trying to say?



asked a few of our lovely writers what SF-related and then to tell us how it treated them...

What I'm going to do with stuff I didn't ask for

Give it away to charity shops or burn it.

Wear my Crystal Lake t-shirt (hey, Jason Voorhees rocks). Watch *The Dark Knight Rises* in standard definition, bemoaning its blurry resolution. Compose a song on the ukulele about having to buy *RoboCop* on Blu-ray for myself.

Yoda key ring – use it! Handy because it has a little lightbulb. NASA hoodie – wear it! (And then actually visit NASA HQ at some point.) Murakami novel – read it! Sounds interesting enough.

Keep them. Despite the fact that it's a New Paradigm Dalek, I like the alarm clock. Although I asked for the games, my Mega Drive's stopped working, so they might be heading for eBay.

I gave a box of truffles I got to my sister. Too fattening.

My *Die Another Day* Blu-ray is now a coaster for my *Star Trek* pint glasses. All else will be used for its intended purpose.

Drink the gin. Obviously.

What I got other people for Christmas

For the daughter, lots of Monster High toys, and for the wife, a *Carry On Screaming* mug. Yes, I'm a hopeless romantic.

Prometheus DVD for a friend. He's one of only two people I know who like it. *Lord Of The Rings* Extended Edition Blu-ray boxset for my wife. I want to see if Orlando Bloom improves in high definition. Another *Prometheus* DVD for the other friend I mentioned.

Star Wars IV, V and VI on a thumb drive (I'm not made of money!) for my flatmate who'd never seen them. You're welcome. *Alien* on DVD for my sister, who claims to laugh at horror films. We'll see about that! R2-D2 stuffed plush toy for my baby nephew.

Brave on DVD for my brother-in-law, a selection of *Doctor Who* books and CDs for my niece and *The Hobbit – A Visual Companion* for my nephew.

My girlfriend, Naomi, was thrilled with *Friday The 13th: The Television Series* on DVD and some *Star Wars* t-shirts. She collects *Star Wars* t-shirts.

Pixar Short Films Collection Volume 1 Blu-ray, Flying Super Grover 2.0, Monster High Lagoona Blue Doll, *Doctor Who* Character Building TARDIS Mini Construction Playset.

My husband got some very fetching Scooby-Doo slippers, which fascinate our four-year-old. Said four-year-old got Buzz Lightyear pyjamas, which he has actually been living in since Christmas Day. And it's also meant we've also had to watch all the *Toy Story* films a lot.



ELVES

DIRECTOR: JEFFREY MANDEL, 1989

IN A NUTSHELL... Teenager Kirsten accidentally cuts her hand, awakening an ancient demonic elf.

DOESN'T SOUND THAT STRANGE... The elf was part of Hitler's plan to conquer the world with a race of human/elf hybrids. Kirsten's grandpa is a reformed Nazi, and is also her father. **ANY GOOD?** IMDb gives it 4.2/10, which seems ludicrously generous.

FUN FACT: Kirsten's mother is played by Deanna Lund, who appeared in *Land Of The Giants* and also wrote a novella based on the series.



JACK FROST

DIRECTOR: MICHAEL COONEY, 1997

IN A NUTSHELL... Serial killer Jack Frost is turned into a killer snowman after an accident.

DOESN'T SOUND THAT STRANGE... It's one of the least strange films here, but it deserves its place, if only for the scene in which a young boy puts antifreeze in his father's oatmeal to keep it warm, conveniently creating a defence against the film's villain.

ANY GOOD? Lovefilm users give it a rather average 2.5/5.

FUN FACT: The following year another film with the same name saw Michael Keaton playing a man called Jack Frost who also died and came back to life as a snowman to spend more time with his son. That film doesn't have quite so many decapitations.

SANTA'S SLAY

DIRECTOR: DAVID STEIMAN, 2005

IN A NUTSHELL... Another entry in the "Killer Santa" sub-genre.

DOESN'T SOUND THAT STRANGE... Santa is the result of a virgin birth brought about by Satan. He enjoys an annual "Day of Slaying" every Christmas until 1005 AD when an angel defeats him in a curling match and sentences him to deliver presents for a thousand years.

ANY GOOD? A surprisingly generous 3.5/5 on play.com.

FUN FACT: The cast includes *Lost*'s Emilie de Ravin and Robert Culp, who was also in *Silent Night, Deadly Night III: Better Watch Out!* ☹

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Yum!

A snack-by-snack guide to munching at the movies!
Plus a further smorgasbord of tasty treats...

Words: Miles Hamer Illustration: Paul Mitchell

AVAILABLE IN THE FOYER



Popcorn

The knobbly perennial of cinema snackers the world over, popcorn's been available in theatres since the medium's infancy. Ousting mobile carnival vendors who traded outside the venues, theatres soon brought that profit (around a staggering 80%) into the building, giving birth to an iconic part of cinema culture. Gill Rutherford, manager of four-screen independent Scott Cinema, confirms that it's still the biggest seller, claiming a third of all concession sales, drink included. "We get through an average of seven bags a day," she reveals, pointing to a huge sack of post-popped product, roughly the size of an overweight Ewok. "Sweet still sells the most, but salted is fast catching up."

But which is better for you? "Well, neither is great," says personal trainer and nutrition guru Sonja Dalgarno, "as both are cooked in oil which is full of saturated fats. But the short-term effect of the salted is dehydration. You'll need to drink more, which means you'll need to go the toilet more, which means you'll miss more of the film!"



Hot Dogs

These most phallic of bun-clad foodstuffs started life in the cultural melting pot of nineteenth century America, but now find themselves making an assured way back into European moviegoers' mouths, albeit somewhat slowly. "We stopped selling them," Gill explains, "as we didn't sell enough to warrant the Environmental Health licensing needed to sell hot food."

The fast food may be more immediately associated with baseball stadiums than cinema foyers, but all the major chains serve up the sausage, despite its notoriously poor

nutritional value. "Processed, mechanically-recovered meat, glued together with starch, flavourings and a hefty whack of salt, together with the old favourite – saturated fats," explains Sonja. Surely there's no harm in the occasional one? "Not at all, but if you visit the cinema regularly – about once a week – and persistently eat this stuff, then you could be looking at obesity, clogged arteries and heart disease in the long term."

Short of installing exercise bikes instead of seats, what can theatres do? "Cinemas could sell alternatives such as unsalted plain popcorn, rice cakes, or sesame seed bars, but I daresay they wouldn't sell very many! Rare treats aren't a problem, and it's unreasonable to expect people to forego the odd indulgence, as long as that's all it is."



Ice Cream

Those offensively miniature tubs of frozen pudding with a disproportionate price-to-product ratio and unfeasibly small wooden shovels. People actually buy them?

Surprisingly, yes. "Audiences all over, from old to young," informs Gill. "They sell like hot cakes." Or cold desserts, more accurately.

So how important is flogging food to its patrons? Incredibly, it would seem. "It's where we make our money." On a packed day, they sell around 1,400 individual products, although curiously, a really popular movie doesn't necessarily translate to consistent profits. "The busier we are, the spend-per-head goes down because everyone's all about getting in to see the film." During such times this averages out to a measly £1.78 per patron, thanks largely to daytime screenings, often attended by economy-conscious film fans able to last two thrifty hours without scoffing treats.



Chocolate

The basic mix of cocoa beans, milk and sugar continues to be devoured by audiences the world over, a level of popularity that not even a poorly-judged Tim Burton remake could possibly derail. Commonly available in cinemas is the grab pouch: over four times the size of a standard bag and, contrary to the "sharers" label on the packaging, often consumed individually.

Could necking over a hundred grams of sugar and 30 grams of fat have any effect on your movie-going experience? "In the short term, the sugar will make you more alert and receptive, but the fat will invoke sluggishness," explains Sonja. Surely "brain active/body inactive" is the perfect way to watch a film? "You'd think, but as sugars are very simple carbohydrates, you'll feel hungry again fairly quickly, which could prove something of a distraction. Ideally, slow energy release food like bananas would be preferable." *Planet Of The Apes* screenings aside, we can't quite see that catching on.



Cola

Whether it's Coke, Pepsi, or the bearded one's own house brand at Virgin Cinemas, the fizzy brown stuff remains the king of beverages, according to the 2012 UK Soft Drinks Report. Despite challenges from the gimmickry of semi-frozen slurps such as Tango Ice Blast and



Note: this is not Miles Hamer.

Slush Puppies, cola is still the de facto drink of choice, although the low calorie/reduced sugar variety outsells regular by roughly two to one.

"Diet" Coke, though – isn't that akin to advertising "exercise" cigarettes? "Water is absolutely the healthiest drink option," insists Sonja. Bit boring, though isn't it? "Well, if you *absolutely must* drink soda, then sugar-free is the way to go. However, that's still crammed full of caffeine and artificial sweeteners, the long-term health risks of which are still uncertain, as they're relatively new." Oh. Just a water for us then.

Alcohol

Getting a skinful at the silver screen may not be everyone's cup of ale, but liquor licensing offers film fans the chance to get slightly sozzled at the cinema, if they so wish. Only in recent years have major chains started offering alcohol, as picture houses take on the cosy combo of home cinema systems and cheap supermarket booze. But surely getting patrons bladdered is asking for trouble though? Any incidents? "Never," insists Gill. Really? "Well, once. But he was quite drunk when he came in though, had one more drink, and was way too intoxicated to go into the screen. That's it." Does one particular genre tend towards the bottle than others? "Well, James Bond fans are good drinkers." That figures.

Previously only available as a pre-screening tittle, relaxed licensing has meant that filmgoers can now take their drinks in with them, which has increased sales substantially. And although smaller independents permit the BYO crowd, most establishments still adhere to strict on-site purchasing policy. "They really shouldn't," says Gill, "But people will smuggle alcohol. We find empty gin bottles, vodka bottles in the auditorium..."

Consumption has also benefited from the rise in popularity of movie drinking games; dedicated websites often publish glugging rules to coincide with release dates. As such, it's not uncommon to find yourself in a theatre alongside someone knocking back a chug of liquor every time Agent

J flashes his neuralyzer gun, or a character buys the farm in the latest *Final Destination*. Or, if it's a *Transformers* film, you'll just find them at the bar afterwards, sobbing gently.

Nachos

South American-derived corn chips popular with melted cheese, but unpopular with whoever finds themselves sat next to someone eating them. Earning special mention on caustic movie critic Mark Kermode's cinematic Code of Conduct, they're frequently derided thanks to their cheesy waft, cacophonous crunch and insipid taste.

Speaking of taste, surely some appetites aren't best served by the genre of film on show. Horror, for example? "They're very big spenders, horror fans," counters Gill. Even if it's vomit-inducing viscera, such as *Saw*? "That won't stop them, they'll shove it down. Because the audience is mainly teenagers and twentysomething man-boys" So, age plays a factor then? "The older you are, the less you tend to spend."

THE MISSION

Eat Though an Entire Cinema Screening, Ads and All
The Film: *Twilight: Breaking Dawn Part 2*

Words: Miles Hamer



How would Edward and Bella like it?

I'VE LOADED UP A WEIGHTY SMORGASBORD OF SNACKS TO SEE ME THOUGH THIS ENDEAVOUR. ONCE THE LIGHTS GO OUT, MY MOUTH OPENS...

THE PEARL & DEAN FANFARE'S FIRING UP, AND I'M STARTING WITH A TUB OF CHILLI NUTS.

FIVE MINUTES LATER I'M COOLING DOWN WITH A MINT CORNETTO AS WE WATCH A TRAILER FOR, ERM, THE FILM WE'RE ABOUT TO WATCH.

ICE CREAM DONE, AND A CONFUSING SWITCH BACK TO SAVOURY, WITH A BOX OF BACON KRAX. I'M AWARE THAT MY JAW HAS ALREADY ENTERED A HYPNOTIC RHYTHM, LIKE A COW IN A TRANCE.

THE FILM'S STARTED AND BELLA'S RESISTING HER VAMPIRIC IMPULSE TO EAT. AS MY FIST MECHANICALLY SHOVELS HANDFULS OF POPCORN INTO MY FACE, I CAN SYMPATHISE READILY.

DEAR GOD, THIS IS HORRIBLE – ROBERT PATTINSON REALLY SUCKS, AND I DON'T MEAN BLOOD. PERHAPS MERCIFULLY, MY MOUTH'S STARTING TO LOSE ALL FEELING. NOW ALTERNATING BETWEEN SCOOPS OF PEANUT M&M'S FOR A BIT OF VARIETY. IT'S NOT WORKING.

AN HOUR IN, SOME VAMPIRES ARE ARM-WRESTLING (OR SOMETHING), AND I'M FINISHING OFF THE POPCORN. HAVE STARTED TO HATE MYSELF A LITTLE BIT. SO, I SUSPECT, DOES THE GIRL SAT NEXT TO ME, WHO OPENLY TUTS AS THE REMAINING FEW KERNELS SPILL DOWN MY SHIRT. IF SHE TURNS OUT TO BE MARK KERMODE IN A WIG, I'M DONE FOR.

THE FILM'S LAGGING A BIT, AND I'M WEARILY OPENING A

THE MISSION

"SHARE" BAG OF REVELS. TACKLING THE RUSSIAN ROULETTE OF SNACKS WOULD BE VAGUELY EXCITING, IF

A) MY TASTEBUDS HADN'T ALREADY DISSOLVED BY NOW
B) THE REVELS AREN'T ALL, INEXPLICABLY, COFFEE.

BELLA, EDWARD AND A CREW OF FANGED GAP MODELS HAVE ASSEMBLED FOR A RUMBLE IN THE SNOW, AS I REACH LIMPLY FOR A BOX OF MINT POPPETS. A GIANT TRACKING SHOT OF IMPROBABLY BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE IS NOT HELPING MY SELF-RESPECT, AS I GULP DOWN YET MORE SUSTENANCE.

CURIOSLY, ALTHOUGH MY TONGUE IS NOW AN OVERWORKED MUSH OF DEADENED NERVE ENDINGS AND REGRET, I'M MORE ENGAGED IN THE FILM THAN EVER. AS I PEEL THE LID FROM A TUB OF CANDY FLOSS, MICHAEL SHEEN'S PREPOSTEROUS TURN AS CAMP VAMP RINGMASTER ARO FEELS STRANGELY APPROPRIATE. ON THE DOWNSIDE, I FEEL LIKE I'M TRYING TO SWALLOW WOOL.

MY HEAD IS SWIMMING IN AN OCEAN OF E-NUMBERS, AND I

He'd even eat in a camp fashion.



FEEL GIDDY WITH EXCITEMENT FOR THESE SURPRISINGLY TENSE BATTLE SCENES. PARESAY THAT WITHOUT THE GLUCOSE, THIS FILM WOULD HAVE EARNED BARELY A SHRUG FROM ME. AS IT IS, HOWEVER, WITH MY BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS SO INSANELY HIGH THAT I COULD PROBABLY SWEETEN TEA JUST BY STARING AT IT, THIS MIGHT JUST BE THE BEST FILM EVER!

THE END CREDITS ROLLS, MY BLOOD SUGAR CRASHES, AND A HEADACHE THE SIZE OF GEORGE LUCAS'S BANK BALANCE BEGINS TO BATTER ITS WAY OUT OF MY SKULL. I GULP DOWN THE LAST OF MY COLA, IDLY BITE ON A SINGLE PIECE OF PICK 'N MIX, AND REALISE THAT MOVING OUT OF MY SEAT IS A MATTER PERHAPS BEST TACKLED BY A COMMUNITY-SPIRITED RUGBY TEAM.

SOME 2,500 OR SO CALORIES AND A DOZEN DIRTY LOOKS LATER, I AM NOW OF THE OPINION THAT THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA, IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT TWILIGHT IS A GOOD VAMPIRE FILM.

Movie fridges

What would happen if we were to cook lunch purely from ingredients as seen in the fridges of our favourite movies? We'd get a tasty meal, that's what (and possibly food poisoning)...

Words: Lee Coan



FRIDGE: As seen in *Ghostbusters*
WHAT'S IN IT? Coke, white wine, baloney, mayonnaise, cheddar, Perrier, orange juice, yoghurt, butter, eggs, evil spirits.

WHAT COULD WE COOK?

Baloney omelette.

HOW TO COOK IT: Heat some butter in a pan, add three eggs, and cook on low or medium heat for three minutes. Add some grated cheese, and chopped baloney, and serve on toast if possible. Drink with the wine to try and help forget that Zuuuuuuuuul is going to come out of that fridge and kill you.



FRIDGE: As seen in *Indiana Jones And The Crystal Skull*

WHAT'S IN IT? Harrison Ford.

WHAT COULD WE COOK? Indiana soup.

HOW TO COOK IT: If he's still breathing, hit Harrison over the head with a shovel repeatedly until dead. Strip him, and remove any heavily soiled clothes. Put the naked corpse (chopped), hat and whip into a large pot of water, bring to the boil, season, and then simmer for three to four hours. Serve with a crusty roll.



FRIDGE: As seen in *American Psycho*
WHAT'S IN IT? Sorbet, human head.
WHAT COULD WE COOK? Icy Eyeballs.

HOW TO COOK IT: Spoon out your severed head's eyeballs (with an, erm, spoon). Let the balls thaw, and once they feel juicy, squeeze as you would a lemon, over your sorbet until all the goodness drizzles out. Plop the remains of the eye on top of your drizzled sorbet like some kind of disgusting cherry.



FRIDGE: As seen in *Goldfinger*
WHAT'S IN IT? Beer, something that we think might be beef burgers, champagne – and if only randy James Bond had got to that bubbly a bit quicker, his naked lady friend may not have been turned into gold.

WHAT COULD WE COOK?

Burgers à la Bond.

HOW TO COOK IT: Fill a saucepan with Don Perignon – bring to the boil for reasons unknown. Drop in your burgers and simmer until toasty brown. Serve with more champagne, maybe a bun if you can find one. Lovely.



FRIDGE: As seen in *ET*

WHAT'S IN IT? Ketchup, some kind of vegetable juice, strawberries, Coke, potato salad, peanut butter, left-over meat (we think it's some kind of steak), beer, milk.

WHAT COULD WE COOK?

Peanut potato surprise.

HOW TO COOK IT: The surprise in our peanut potato surprise, is that, erm, there's strawberries in it. Meat too. To make it just take one pot of potato salad, squeeze in some ketchup, add two spoons of peanut butter and stir furiously (with ET's long finger). Add milk, diced strawberries, and the meat. Yum.

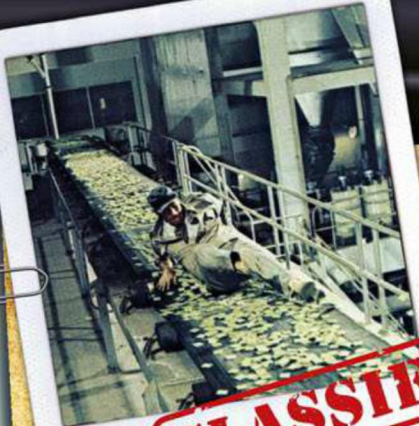


FRIDGE: As seen in the aptly named *The Refrigerator*

WHAT'S IN IT? Pure evil – this is a slasher movie with the fridge as the bad guy. However, on top of the spirit of Satan, this fridge has a lot of tasty stuff in it. There's mayonnaise, 7 Up, milk, orange juice, ketchup, erm, blood, a desktop fan, beer and Gatorade.

WHAT COULD WE COOK? A Bloody Mary with a twist!

HOW TO COOK IT: Instead of tomato juice use two parts blood, one part orange juice. Add beer, milk and a dollop of mayonnaise to make sure you bring it straight back up. Digesting such a thing would be disastrous.



CLASSIFIED

REPORT: FEEDING THE WORLD IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Words: David Cromarty

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

The world's population has been growing steadily for more than 600 years, and now stands at an estimated 7.054 billion. With some estimates of the planet's carrying capacity – that is, the number of people the Earth can support indefinitely – being as low as 4 billion, we must find new ways to feed the ever increasing population.

Proposal 1 – Ratburgers

The mild climate of the UK suits the brown rat, and there are an estimated 81 million of the creatures in the country. (That's 1.3 for every person.) This is a huge untapped food source. Early taste trials of the product have been surprisingly positive, with one gentleman describing it as "the best burger I've had in years!"

Proposal 2 – Soylent Green

Few companies have done as much to ease the food shortages as the Soylent Corporation, but it has to be conceded that previous "red" and "yellow" products have been unsatisfying in the areas of nutrition and taste. Thanks to the re-discovery of a high-energy plankton previously believed extinct, new product Soylent Green solves both these problems.

Proposal 3 – Mutant animals

Although not the most visually attractive of dishes, meat harvested from mutant reptiles and amphibians provide new and unimagined taste sensations. (Unfortunately, it has been discovered that a firearm can be constructed from the inedible parts, raising obvious safety concerns.)

Proposal 4 – "The Food of the Gods"

This mysterious substance was discovered on a remote island in British Columbia by a couple who believed it to be a gift from God. Unfortunately, in its current form it causes extreme growth and has been linked with violent behaviour. Product will likely require extensive modification in order to be safe for consumption.

Proposal 5 – LHR

It has been proposed that people could gain many of the nutrients they need from the liquefied remains of the dead. We anticipate considerable resistance to this proposal. Suggestions for more positive ways to sell this proposal would be appreciated.

Proposal 6 – Man-made chickens

Considerably smaller than their naturally-occurring cousins, these artificial animals have an unfortunate habit of gushing blood when cut. Many people also found their leg movements rather disconcerting.

CONCLUSION

We are forced to conclude that most of the above options are fundamentally unworkable. Objections to taste, texture and appearance rule out many of the above options. A large minority of people are also expected to object to some of these proposals on moral grounds.

In short, the only workable solution to the food crisis is Soylent Green. Though in short supply, this is undoubtedly the most attractive option and fulfills all objectives. We recommend the government gives this product its full support.

(Proposals taken from *Demolition Man*, *Soylent Green*, *eXistenZ*, *The Food Of The Gods*, *The Matrix* and *Eraserhead*.)

er, films beginning with the letter Z

To close, a quick look at the letter hardly anyone likes to start their film with...

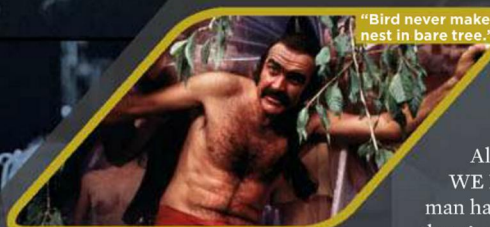
Words: Russell Lewin

The letter Z is a little unloved. One of the thinnest sections of the dictionary, it's the crumbs at the bottom of the biscuit packet. So it is with film guides too, with Z films almost a sad afterthought. But Z films do exist! So here we present a quick rundown of the most notable. Or the ones we could think of, anyway. Mmm, most of them aren't actually very good – maybe there's a reason why films don't start with the letter Z...

ZAPPED! (1982)

The cover of this one, when it was on VHS in the '80s, shouted to moist-palmed teenage boys "Rent me! Rent me!" (And the synopsis on the back read: "A high school pupil uses his telekinetic powers to tear girls' clothes off at the prom".) There was a bit of boob... but not that

much. After all, it was just a 15, not an 18, like super-seedy contemporary *The Invisible Maniac*, for instance. Lofty types might brand the whole exercise "tawdry", but it actually spawned a sequel in 1990! Scott Baio (*Bugsy Malone*, Chachi in *Happy Days*) is the only recognisable face on show.



"Bird never make nest in bare tree."

ZARDOZ (1974)

Or Zzzzzzzzardoz, as some wags dubbed it. Occasional master of pretension John Boorman directs this far-future tale of a warrior infiltrating a land of intellectuals, and ensures it's amusingly portentous. It looks good but is stupidly nonsensical and lasts far too long. Sean Connery looks anything *but* good in outfits that alarmingly showcase his birds' nest chest, and Charlotte Rampling looks half asleep. Presumably like audiences were.

ZELIG (1983)

When *SFX* posted a review of Woody Allen's *Midnight In Paris* last year we began it by saying

induced"), so there's little need to build sets of any description. This'd be tolerable if it wasn't such an undramatic film devoid of humour. Director Michael Campus went on to nothing else of interest and star Oliver Reed went on to *The Three Musketeers*, *Castaway*, *Gladiator* and dropping dead in a Malta bar after arm-wrestling sailors and downing eight lagers, 12 double rums and half a bottle of whisky.

ZETA ONE (1969)

A quite extraordinary film that could not have been made at any other time or in any other place (London, England). It concerns a race of frequently topless female aliens in need of human male specimens, and features scenes like *Carry On's* Charles Hawtrey and the *Doctor*

ZERO POPULATION GROWTH (1972)

This un's set in the future, where having children is illegal – but one couple break the law. Handily for such a low-budget film, it's very, very foggy in this version of days still to come (it's "pollution-

films' James Robertson Justice leering like Jimmy Savile over a naked, tied down woman. Awful but incredible, it's strange, psychedelic, disjointed and heavily padded. Tellingly, the director never made another film.

ZOLTAN, HOUND OF DRACULA (1977)

Also known by the wonderful title of *Dracula's Dog*, this real grade-Z flick concerns Russian soldiers (with American accents) who accidentally unleash the canine servant of Dracula. The dog revives a mute vampire acolyte (Reggie Nalder), so they can head to America to find a new master. The excitement is as low as the budget and it's not even unintentionally funny cos it's so dull.

"Woody Allen in *SFX*? Yes indeed, because *Midnight In Paris* is a time-travel drama." To which some irritant posted in the Comments section: "Woody Allen in *SFX*? erm... *Sleeper*". Yes, WE KNOW, we know the great man has done fantasy before – there's also *Alice*, *The Purple Rose Of Cairo* and, if you like, *Love And Death* – but it's pretty unusual. This genre film is 30 years old and is one of his classics. The life of a human chameleon, it's a fiendishly clever, unique fantasia in which the stars play alongside Hitler, Roosevelt and so on. Also, an anxious Woody worries: "I'll be late for my masturbation class, they might start without me."



"I want you!" he said on '80s video covers.

ZONE TROOPERS (1985)

During World War Two, aliens arrive on Earth to help some American soldiers. A mix of sci-fi and war movie in which the cheapness really shows through – it has its fans, though. Stars Art LaFleur. That well known fella. ☹️



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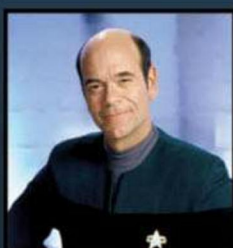
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Buffy the Vampire Slayer



JOHN CHALLIS
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